Making of the Past in South India Historian's Craft under Colonialism

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By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled "Making of the Past in South India Historian's Craft under Colonialism" has been submitted by Vijayalakshmi C. in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History. It has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. This is her own work and she had carried out this work under my supervision.

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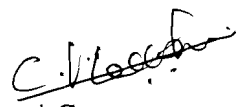School of Social Sciences
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DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that the research for the thesis entitled "Making of the Past in South India Historian's Craft under Colonialism" being submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History was carried out entirely by me.

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter I

Introduction

The Context

This is a study that examines how contact with the British historical writings produced a new sense of history in southernmost regions of India under colonialism. This thesis attempts to study the nature of this transition from the pre-colonial ways of narrating the past to the scientific methods of writing of history.

The pre-colonial forms of representation of the past had its own logic and epistemological positions which rendered them sensible in the society. These indigenous forms of representation of the past were pluralistic in nature, but all these forms enjoyed equal status as Pramana (authoritative).

A major epistemic rupture set in with the establishment of colonial rule in India. The colonial rule which was characterised as the age of modernity, reinforced its own epistemic order, as of superior category, in terms of rationality, truth and accuracy. This new epistemic order, anchored in the continental philosophy, initiated new process of historical scholarship. It generated a vast corpus of knowledge on all aspects of the life and culture in the colonised region of India and South India.

The representation of the past was one of the sites where knowledge of the past was generated in the framework of Western epistemic order. Modernity enabled a distinction between literature and history. It defined what history is and

how history should be written. Though the models of historiography of India exercised a great influence in the craft of historians, the making of the past in the colonial South was not just an imitation of Indian historiography. There are variations in relation to culture, people and region in the historiography of the far south. The historiography of the far south is re-examined here in terms of these variations by focusing on the dynamics of external and internal factors in the making of the past. The fundamental assumptions, postulates and historical interpretations that constitute regional/racial/cultural identities are reassessed. The formation of regional identities brings out the pattern of interaction between the pan Indian model and the regional variations. This has found little space in the writings on modernity. So this needs to be studied. An attempt is made here to illustrate how the craft of historians in the colonial south articulated appropriation and resistance to the over arching models of historiography in India under colonialism.

The study of colonial historiography in the far South through the intensive reading of the historical texts in Tamilakam and Keralam is superfluous in the absence of an enquiry into the process of generation of sources. Since the use of sources constitutes the chief context of assessing the craft of historians, the different categories of knowledge produced by the official and non-official agencies are examined here. Such sources numerous and heterogeneous in nature can be characterized as the main factor of production of historical knowledge in the colonial south. So this thesis though primarily a critique of historiography is not limited to the conventional discipline of history alone. It transcends the

discipline and incorporates theoretical insights of disciplines such as Linguistics, Anthropology, Philosophy and Sociology. On the whole its domain is critical historiography and social theory.

The region under study consists of the southernmost states of India, such as Tamilnadu and Kerala. In the historical texts of colonial south India the region is designated as Tamilakam that included Keralam (the West Coast). Colonial Indian historiography considered the regions as south India. Indian historiography of later ages designated these regions as /extreme south/the far south. Combining these trends in Indian historiography, in this thesis, the combined regions of Tamilnadu and Kerala are designated as South India/Southern India/the far South. The term south of India is also employed in this study to designate the southern most regions of India (Tamilakam and Keralam).

The temporal scope of this thesis is limited to the colonial period from 1867 to 1945. The rationale is that it was during this period that a number of scholars attempted to reconstruct history of the region on modern lines. This was an age of production of historical texts on Tamilakam and Keralam.

Objectives

1. To analyse the different forms of representation of past in the premodern age and explain how they evolved and functioned in the socio-economic and political formations of their times.

2. To explore the nature of historiography in colonial South India as a site of transition from oral compositions of traditional chronicles to scientific writing of history.

3. To examine the role of cultural factors and the colonial intellectual impact in the making of scientific history in South India.

4. To examine the role of historiography in the formation of cultural/regional identities in colonial South India.

5. To illustrate the different parameters employed by colonial historians for the reconstruction of history on modern lines.

6. To re-examine the notion of scientific writing of history and explain the limitations.

Methodology

Historiography is a modern phenomenon that has evolved through institutional patterning and modeled on the methodological norms of Positivism. It is related to the critical appreciation of texts of the past, their trends and shortcomings. Historiography has its own privileged status among the signs of the new cultural system, as it represents the normative framework as to how the texts of the past should be.

Positivist historians taking every possible precaution to assure objectivity of information, assumed that the knowledge thus derived would be true history. But the intellectual traditions of Postmodernism presuppose that knowledge can be articulated only through interpretation. So it is now commonly accepted that

true history is a contested notion. Historians today seldom believe that they write uncontested truth about the past. The main reason is the inescapable link of written history with the present.[1] Histories are written under the control of the socio economic and political stimuli of historian's times. Historians are bound by the present that provides them with their modes of perception of the past. It is being increasingly recognised that methodological objectivity would not mean more than the historian's openness and transparency about the conceptual presuppositions deployed in their interpretation. The colonial historians did not have understood that sources in the form of texts displayed the intentions of the author, which were conditioned by the social and political environment to which the author belonged. If this is accepted it reveals that an understanding of the text lies partly in grasping what the kind of society the author was addressing. Thus the context consists of both "what the texts intended to mean and how the meaning was supposed to be understood."[2] But during the last twenty years through critical debates postmodernism has questioned several assumptions in understanding a text.[3] There is a shift from the material context of a text to the language of the text. Language is no longer considered as a neutral, transparent medium. Reflexive reading of texts is a recent phenomenon enabled by postmodern thinking. It is different from the reflection over historical works that speak only of the author and his writings. But reflexive reading of the text

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[1] R.G. Collingwood's thesis of "Contemporary consciousness" (*The Idea of History*, rpt. OUP. 1994) has become too much a part of the accepted wisdom to require acknowledgement today.

[2] Question Skinner, "Meaning And Understanding in the History of Ideas," In *History and Theory*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 39-40.

[3] See discussions in Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, Routledge, London, 1997. pp. 57-73.

bringsforth the reappearance of the voice of the author. This is made possible due to:

a)   The recognition that writing has its own limitations in expressing the ideas absolutely. There is a space between thoughts and writing.[4]

b)   There is also the possibility of inconsistencies in expressing ideas.

Hence reflexive reading is adopted as the method i.e. reflexive methodology capable of exploring the context. Inter-textuality of the historical works is explored in the process of using it.

Post modernism perceives a rather complex operational base that is better explained through discourse analysis. Methodological insights are also drawn from the critical social theories of Annales, particularly from the theory of production of space by Henry Lucienfbvre. In effect the methodology or the theoretical basis of hermeneutics adopted in the present study is a combination critical theory, Annales perspectives and postmodern thinking without being identified with any one of them. It is neither modern nor postmodern and in that sense a critique of both. This approach we owe largely to Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive methodology.

Heuristics as a primary technique remains the same as usual divided in to primary and secondary. However, the primary data for the present study are what historians treat secondary, for ours is a historiographic study rather than historical study. It is historical too in the sense of history of ideas in historical writings.

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[4]   Jonathan Culler on *Deconstruction Theory and Criticism After Structuralism*, London 1987, p. 44.

The different meanings attributed to discourse rather places the word in a position of advantage. Though the literal translation of the word is speech or conversation it denotes the relationship between formation of knowledge that commands authority and a particular environment that produces collective consciousness which provides new insights in to an extensive realm of new knowledge and practices in different fields. The mechanism operates till the 'other' is reconstituted after the model. Thus discourse entails a particular mode of domination, organisation and reconstitution to which the others are subjected.[5]

Sources

One of the major themes of study in this thesis is the transformation that took place in the historical consciousness of the society of South India during the colonial period. To understand this transformation it is necessary to examine the peculiarities of the sense of past that existed in this land before we came into contact the West. In the traditional society of India, the sense of past that was expressed through several forms of literature such as the gatha, nārāsaṁsi-s, akhyana, vijaya, charitha, the itihasa, purana traditions and the non-puranic traditions (kavya and carita) are studied. The sections in the *Rigvedic Samhita* that are related to the expressions of past are examined. The pioneer texts by A.D. Pusalker F.E. Pargiter as well as the texts of later ages by scholars who conducted studies in these traditions are examined. There were traditional forms

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[5] Discourse is power/knowledge combine that subjectify people and control their thoughts and actions. For a discussion of discourse analysis and history, see Alun Munslow, *Op. Cit.* pp. 120-139.

of literature in the Southern most regions of India which shared broad similarities with these Sanskrit traditions. Song was the earliest form of historical tradition. Keralolpatti, the different categories of songs, Mooshaka Vaṃśa kavya, the caritam-s which existed in the traditional society of Keralam are studied. In Tamilakam different categories of songs existed from time to time. *Nattupadalkal, pallupadalkal, kathaipadalkal, ula, parani* and *tutu* are reviewed.

The pioneer historical texts emerged in the Southern regions of India (Tamilakam and Keralam) from 1867. Colonial historigoraphy of Southern India was enriched by eminent scholars. In Tamilakom the pioneer V.Kanakasabhai (*The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, 1904) was followed by scholars such as Krishnaswami Aiyanger (*South India and Her Mohammedan Invaders*, 1921; *The Beginnings of South Indian History*, 1918; *The Evolution of Hindu Administrative Institutions in South India*, 1931; *A History of Tondai Mandalam*, 1940); M. Srinivasa Aiyanger (*Tamil Studies*, 1914); R. Sathianatha Aiyar (*The History of the Nayaks of Madura*, 1924); T.R. Shesha Aiyangar, (*Dravidian India*, 1925); K.G. Shesha Aiyangar (*Cera Kings of the Sangam Period*, 1937); K.V. Subramania Iyer (*Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, 1917); P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar (*Pre Aryan Tamil Culture*, 1928, *History of the Tamils from the Earliest Times to 600 A.D.*, 1931; *The Past in the Present*, 1928); K.N. Sivaraja Pillai (*The Chronology of the Tamils*, 1932); K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (*The Pandyan Kingdom*, 1929; *The Colas*, 1935; *Foreign Notices of South India From Megasthenes to Mahuam*, 1939); A. Appadourai (*Economic Conditions in*

South India 1000-1500 AD, 1936); C. Minakshi (*Administrative and Social Life Under the Pallavas*, 1938); T.N. Subramanian (*History of Tamil Nad to 1565 A.D.*, 1914); V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar (*Studied in Tamil Literature and History*, 1936) and S. Venkata Ramanyya (*Early Muslim Expansion in South India*, 1943).

In Keralam the writing of history in the form of a text was initiated by Pacchu Moothathu (*Thiruvithamcore charithram*, 1867); P. Shangoony Menon (*The History of Travancore From the Earliest Times to 1867 A.D*, 1878); K.P. Padmanaba Menon (*Cochi Rajya Charithram*, 1914, *History of Kerala*, 4 vols. 1929); T.R. Krishna Menon (*Progress of Cochin*, 1932); K.V. Krishna Iyer (*The Zamorins of Calicut From the Earliest Times To A.D. 1806*, 1936). Set the model for the writing of history in Keralam.

The primary sources for the study also include the Administrative reports, Census reports, the Descriptive catalogue of Manuscripts, the Survey reports, the State Manuals, the Ethnographical Studies that were initiated by the British administrative machinery in colonial South India. This created a system of knowledge about the land and its inhabitants.

The travelogues and missionery literature which were used as the sources by the colonial historians are also reviewed.

About the Chapters

This study is organised in three chapters. The second chapter entitled Representation of the past in the precolonial society of India examines the

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evolution of different forms of representation of the past which existed in the precolonial society of India. On the basis of content and social environment they are categorised into Traditions of the Vedic Age, the *Itihasa* traditions, the *Puranic* traditions and the *Non-puranic* traditions. Their Structural peculiarities are discussed. The evidences for political, social and economic conditions are studied. The perceptions of space and time are studied in relation to the epistemological positions and logic which existed in the pre colonial society of India. The processes behind the making of the *itihasa* traditions and the *puranic* traditions as mega-narratives are examined. How the traditions in the pre-colonial society of India underwent a constant restructuring and complexities in accordance with the changes in political and social environments is the issue focused upon in this chapter. The primary sources, the studies on each of these traditions, and the studies on religions in India are employed as sources. For a better understanding of the linguistic peculiarities of these traditions the texts which discuss origins and structural peculiarities of different *genres* of literature are also consulted. As the traditions in the preliterate society centre round tribal chiefdoms, anthropological writings on tribal societies are also examined.

Chapter III, 'The Mapping of Tamilakam aɲd Keralam in Colonial Historiography' examines the assumptions and interpretations that created historical units in the historiography of the colonial South. Such an exercise reveals that there is no single scientific criterion for the mapping of regions. The nature of historical interpretations in the formation of racial/culture/ regional/ identities is examined. The differences of opinion among historians in the
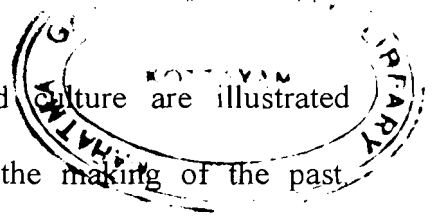
geographical definitions of regions, population and culture are illustrated to reveal the autonomy exercised by historians in the making of the past. The pattern of interaction between the pan Indian models of historiography and the variables in the craft of historians of the colonial south are examined. The arguments behind the construction of the geographical unit of the far south and the role of historical interpretations in the formation of regional/cultural/ linguistic/racial identities are re-examined. How the making of the past was influenced by the specific social and political environment of the society to which the historians belonged is illustrated by examining the devotion to anti-brahmanical and brahmanical loyalties in the mapping of Tamilakam and Keralam.

As one of the basic premises of historiography in the Colonial South, the geographical formulations of India and South India as revealed by the British historical tradition are examined. Local narratives and precolonial forms of representation of the past such as *Ula, Parani, Tutu* and the *Saiva Siddhanta* literature of the medieval Tamil society and the different categories of local narratives of the ancient and the medieval Keralam are re-examined as a major category of sources. The official literature in the form of Survey reports, Census reports, Administrative reports, State Manuals, compilations of inscriptions were employed as the primary sources by the historians of Tamilakam and Keralam. These are studied with reference to how they provided a body of knowledge about the land and people which acted as determinants in the making of the past in the colonial South. The other

categories of sources such as travel accounts and missionary literature are re-examined as factors which conditioned the craft of the historians in the colonial South. The anthropological writings in the far south is also surveyed as one of the premises of colonial historiography.

Chapter IV entitled 'Historiography of Colonial South India, A Methodological Critique' examines the analytical procedure employed by historians in sources. The conscious or inadvertent objectives of historians in the production of historical texts are examined. How the contact with the West produced a sense of history in colonial South India is explained. The differences between the theoretical formulations of history, and the actual practices of writing history or illustrated by re-examining certain issues which the historians themselves defined as 'historical questions'. This chapter is not concerned with the truth/falsity of the contents of the texts. But it identifies how contact with the West produced a sense of history in the minds of the indigenous scholars.

Articles from journals and the proceedings of the South Indian History Congress and Indian History congress that are related to the present study have enabled to understand the embedded theoretical and conceptual problems in the colonial historiography of the far south. The texts of post-colonial period that are related to the present study are consulted as they highlight the methodological limitations of colonial historiography of the far south.

Scope

This study seeks to unravel the epistemological position of historiography in the colonial South. Such an exercise can help us understand the disciplining process that took place in the representation of the past in the southern most regions of India under colonialism. This study also endeavours to re-examine the processes behind the construction of certain postulates that continue to dominate South Indian historiography. It enables us to know how historical interpretation formed the base for cultural/regional/racial identities in the colonial South. This critical historiographic understanding is very significant in the contemporary social situation.

Chapter II

The Representation of Past in the Pre-colonial Society of India

Thousands of traditions existed in the pre-colonial society of India as expressed through several *genres* of literature such as *gatha, narasaṁsi, ākhyāna, itihasa, purana, kavya* and *carita* that transmitted knowledge of the past. On the basis of structure, content, character and socio-economic, ritual and political contexts these *genres* can be categorised into the *Vedic, itihasic, puranic* and *non-puranic*. The evolution of each of these categories and its features, character and perspectives are examined in this chapter. In the back ground of the socio-economic formations of its times. Certain *genres* like *itihasa* has multiple social formations of disparate periods.

In early India tradition was known as *Sruta*.[1] *Sruta* denotes literally that which is heard, represents the oral tradition, which dates back to the first

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[1]   The richness of tradition in India and its significance as sources of information are generally recognised. *Sruta* is regarded by F.E. Pargitar as indicating the tradition in general, which consists of both the kshatriya and Brahminical traditions. The analysis of Purānas as a part of Indian tradition is a major theme in his work. Pargitar *F.E., Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, Delhi, 1962, p.11. Tradition in India and the political and social contexts of formation are discussed by Romila Thapar. The emphasis is on the appropriation and transformation of Traditions, in the context of formation of state (Kingdoms) in India. The term *Sruta* is employed to designate the Indian tradition up to the age of the Guptas. Mythology, Genealogy, and historical narrative are regarded as the essential elements of tradition in any culture to which the Indian tradition forms no exception. For further details see Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* New Delhi, 1990, pp. 270-283. Also see her, "The First Millennium B.C. in Northern India" in Romila Thapar (ed) *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, Bombay, 1995, pp. 80-87. Following the essentialist methodology of Indologists the tendency among the Western writers on the history of India is to regard tradition (*Sruta*) as Brahminical tradition. They believe that it represents the ideas, beliefs, and rituals associated with the Brahmins in India. Among many, a few may be cited as examples. Tolboy Wheeler, *India of Vedic Age with Reference To Mahabharata* Delhi, 1953 pp. 4-12. Ainslie T. Embree, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Vol. II U.K., 1958 pp. 3-7. The studies by nationalist historians attempted to prove the existence of state and political institutions in India form very early ages. *Sruta* is regarded as tradition in general. For further details of this approach see Altekar, *Political Institutions In Ancient India*, Delhi, 1958.

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millennium B.C. There are two varieties in the oral tradition - the intellectual scientific tradition, and the popular tradition.[2] *Sruti* literally hearing and *Smṛti* memorising are the methods of transmission of *Sruta*[3] (tradition).

Traditions in the Vedic Age

Rig Veda, the earliest written evidence, incorporates several references to *Sruti*. *Sruti* represents the contents claimed to have been originally heard.[4] *Vac*, the sound transformed into meaning, is the basic component in *Sruti*.

> "*Vac* must have arisen out of the urge to communicate the cumulative experiences and rationalise the findings to satisfy the human eagerness to participate in the universal cosmic drama."[5]

The four *samhitas*, *Brahmanas* and *Aranyakas* of the four *Vedas* which claimed powers born out of *mantras* and rituals are regarded as derived from *sruti*. *Vac* is regarded as feminine as she gives life to ideas and thoughts.[6] Like Agni the concept of power and energy, *R'ta* the law of order in nature, vac (sound with meaning) is thought of as some thing which can not be fully explained. So it is regarded as a revelation[7] in the *Rig Veda*. Thus *Vac* entails the function of passing the information, later identified with *Jnana*[8] or knowledge, which is

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[2] For further details on sruta, see "Genealogies and the oral tradition" in the *Methodology of the Use of Oral Sources in History* Report of the first India Zimbabwe Conference, Harare, 1989, p. 13.

[3] For the relevant discussion, see Romila Thapar, "The First Millennium B.C. in Northern India" in Romila Thapar (ed). *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*. Bombay, 1995, p. 84.

[4] *Op. cit.* p. 150.

[5] Vannucci, *Ecological Readings in the Veda*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 89.

[6] The function of Vac is illustrated in the *Rig Veda* as the vehicle for prayers and rituals. Vac is the means to convey prayers, C. Narayanan Nambuthiri, (trans) *Rig Veda Vol. X*, Trichur, 1989, VI:114. V2:125. Vac spreads as far as the prayer goes and conveys knowledge.
Rig Veda X 1.V.110. The *Atharva Veda* regards Vac as bearing Mitra, Varuna, Indira and Agni. C. Narayanan Nambuthiri, (trans) *Adharva Veda* Vol. IV, Trichur, 1989, 2. V.30.

[7] Later the notion of divine revelation was perpetuated to guard the intellectual tradition zealously. The basic scientific, speculations, observation, empiricism and experimentation are rendered in symbolic language. It is preserved as sacred. How the knowledge is acquired is kept as a secret purposefully. For further illustrations of this trend see Vannucci, *Ecological Readings in the Veda*, Bahri Publications, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 76-80. A new way of looking at the claims of divine revelation in the vedic texts is t be found in the phenomenological enquiry in to the vedas. For further details see Dayakrishna, *Indian Philosophy a Counter perspective*, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 48-52.

[8] The conceptualisation of *Jnana* is visible only in the later *mandalas* of *Rig Veda*. *Jnana* here indicates the intuition that is necessary to fathom the authoritative-pramanya (*sruti*) C. Narayanan Nambuthiri, (trans) *Rig Veda*, Trichur, 1989, Vol X V6:43, *Rig Veda Vol.X* 1. V 12.

invoked in *Rig Veda* as a divinity. The significance attached to *vac* in *Rig Veda* indicates the trust on oral tradition as "the art of writing was either unknown or not much in use in the Vedic period."[9] A notable feature is the great care taken to avoid mistakes as far as possible is evident in the closed structure of the Vedic literature (For the details of Vedic literature see Table 2.1). Symbolic language and abstraction are regarded as one of the essential features of closed structure. There is a detailed system of mnemonic devices[10] to ensure precision, which is visible in the intellectual tradition in *Rig Veda*. The hymns of *Rig Veda* have mnemonic aids. The metres are short, and set to music. Hence they are very concise in expression.[11]

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[9]   Altekar. *Political Institutions in Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1958, p. 187.

[10]   Mnemonic devices are employed to ensure proper memory of order in the transmission of oral traditions. They are attributed to the non literate society. Colours, knots and objects are employed to ensure continuity in oral traditions in the societies of Africa, Inca and Peru. For further details see Jan Von Sina, *Oral Tradition, A Study in Historical Methodology*, London, 1961, pp. 35-36. In the Indian context the mnemonic devices are regarded as based on different patterns of memorizing the syllables of words as it is believed that even *Sabda* has its own power. This trend is visible even in literate tradition of the Vedas (Vedic *Samhitas*). Dependency of these mnemonic devices on literary form is recognised. Though mnemonic devices are assigned to the pre-literate society there is considerable ambiguity as to when they were converted into written forms and what were the circumstances of transition. For details of restructuring of oral tradition in written forms see, Romila Thapar, "Genealogies and the oral tradition" in the *Methodology of the Use of Oral Sources in History* Report of the First India Zimbabwe conference, Harare, 1989, pp. 13-15.

[11]   Metrical poetry and music are employed for the correct and easy transmission of ideas. They serve as captions and allusions to recall the oral teachings of the Guru. Knowledge is held as sacred and secret. The annual cycle of the sun, the possibility for forecasting a calendar is indicated but no details as to how the science developed are not given. See C. Narayanan Nambuthiri, (trans), *Rig Veda Vol.* VI. Trichur. 1989, 2V: 44. Scientific speculations, conclusions obtained by empiricism are imparted to only carefully selected sisyas. Hence esoteric language is employed and it could be understood only those well versed in it. There is a considerable accumulation of knowledge through the interaction with the locals (*Anarya*) as revealed by the myth of the stolen cows hidden in a cave, which were liberated by Agni as somapavanäma and by the valour of Indira. *Op.cit* V. 37, Trichur 1989. One of the features of the closed texts is that they express metaphorically characteristics of an object or objects. They also have sequential co-relation. The repetitions are not intended to reveal continuity, but to express the relation in multiplicity. The structure in intellectual tradition and the constitutive process of intellectual tradition are illustrated though the study of Holy Trinity in Christian theology by Abelard of 13th century. For further details see H.S. Gill, *Structures of Narrative in East and West*, New Delhi 1989 pp. 80-96. "Mental images of words form very convenient centres for thinking with. It has the quality of abstraction and generality so essential to reasoning. To reason is to operate with symbols in the head." Gordon Childe, *What Happened in History?* London, 1942, p. 20. The motive behind the secrecy associated with knowledge is assigned to the hostile environment which the Aryans encountered. See Vannucci *Ecological Readings in the Vedas*, New Delhi, 1994. pp. 104-110. Confrontation with civilisational opposite is regarded as the basis of stimulus to thought. This is explained from the Greek situation though this can be regarded as part of the assertion, associated with the theory of conquest. See Madhuri Sondhi and Mary Walker, (ed) *Ecology Religion and Philosophy*, Delhi. 1988, p. 142.

The memory is more accurate than written manuscript.[12] Most of the hymns express concepts and functions as represented by Gods.[13] Thus *sruti* represents the integrated domain of knowledge and its mode of transmission which is oral. *Sruti* constitutes the intellectual tradition in the *Rig Veda*. In their migration from the steppes of Central Asia to the North western regions of India, the early groups of Indo Aryan speaking pastoralists came into contact with new environments and different materials. Predictions were necessary for seasonal migrations for pastoral activities and accumulation of knowledge of medicine, plants, rivers, seasons, rains and forests in the new environment was essential. This constituted the intellectual tradition in the *Rig Veda*. They existed in the form of unconnected compositions as revealed by the earlier sections of the *Rig Veda*. "They are preserved as sacred revelations of ancient wisdom by the different families of Aryans by way of oral tradition for centuries before the compilation into the *Vedas*.[14] Ritualistic considerations are the prime motive behind the compilation of these traditions in to the *Vedas*.[15] Rituals are one of the

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[12] See for details, Hajime Nakamura, *A Comparative History of Ideas*, Delhi, 1992, p. 24.

[13] The observation and rationalisation of Agni, its pragmatic value are represented in figurative language. The concept of power and energy that can be seen and formulated but cannot fully explained or understood gives birth to the First God Agni. The eagerness to understand Agni is expressed in the *Rig Veda* where Agni signifies truth or knowledge. For the discussion of the representation of *Agni* in the *Rig Veda* see Vannucci, *Ecological Readings in the Vedas*, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 62-76.

[14] See the discussion in Rama Chandra Ghosha, *The Indo Aryans-Their History, Creed & Practice*, Calcutta, 1881, p. 82. Family traditions are recognised as one of the main streams in the oral tradition. Family traditions and their transformation into official tradition in the context of Greece are analysed by Rosalind Thomas. The social and political patterns implicit in the oral tradition are discussed. For further details see Rosalind Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens*, U.K., 1989, pp. 152-155.

[15] Ritual Status is regarded as one of the essential features of distinction between the *Arya* and the *Anarya* in the lineage society. In the lineage society the affiliation of families to the *gotra* was strong. The Rituals varied from family to family. The compilation of Vedic hymns is regarded as indicating the tendency towards homogenization of groups of Aryans and hierarchical society and the beginnings of the notion of authority. For the details on Ritual Status see Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, Delhi, 1990, pp. 21-23.

channels for redistribution in the lineage society.[16] The hymns of the later

mandalas of *Rig Veda*, especially of the Xth *mandala* represent the *pitris* as

fathers of families "who have departed this life and passed in to a state of

blessedness as objects of adoration to their descendants.[17] There are hymns in the

Rig Veda which are regarded as having been composed by the sons, fathers and

ancestors.[18] This indicates the existence of another mode of transmission namely

smrti and the streams of popular oral tradition associated with it.

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[16] The redistributive system in territorial chiefdoms termed as acephalous communities and the affinity between the redistributive system and the religious system in Greece are discussed by Goody Jack. Booty is regarded as the source of wealth in acephalous communities. For the relevant discussion on this redistributive system. See Jack Goody, *The Logic of writing and the organisation of society*, U.K. 1986, pp. 22-29. In the Indian context the redistributive system is associated with *Dana* and *Dakshina*. For the detailed discussion on social, economic and religious functions of Dana and Dadshina see Romila Thapar *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 116-130. The *Rig Veda* has many hymns known as *Danastutis* where mythological figures *Indra*, and *Varuna* are represented as the Chiefs who protect the subjects. See, Narayanan Nambuthiri, (trans). *Rig Veda* Vol. III 5: V:15 Vol IV 2:V2, 3:VI4, 4:V 23, Trichur, 1989. *Danastutis* also speak of human figures (chiefs) like Sahadeva, Somaka, Vudathi, Rina Sanjaya. The names are found in the fragments of descent lists which later became the model for genealogy. The *Dana* made in the form of cows & horses by kings are also indicated. These are described as *Danas* made over to the Brahmanas. Here the chief is known by the epithet *yajamana, Op cit.* V:18, 5:V19, 2:V25, 2:V29.

[17] *Op cit.* 15.V2, 15.V:29: The hope that family relations shall be maintained in the next world are expressed in the *Satapatha brahmana*. *Satapatha brahmana*, Vol. IV, Vol. XI, and Vol. XII, Vol. XI 1.8, Vol. XII 8.34. The notion of *pitris* is expressed only in the tenth *mandala* of *Rig Veda*. It is extended in the upanishads which speak of *pitris* and the oblations to them. The *pitris* are ranked along with the Devas. For further details see, V. Balakrishnan, (trans) *Brihadarenyam Upanishad*, Kottayam, 1976. Chapter I 3: V10, 4: V53, 5: V70.

[18] The early memories of ancestors are later restructured and designated as the tradition of seven *rsis*. They are Brigu, Bharadwaja, Jamadgni, Visvamitra, Vashista, Kashyapa and Atri. It has been pointed out that the later portions of *Rig Veda* abounds in mythologies of origin of different *rsis* which signifies the status of the *gotras*. The popular tradition appropriates the seven *rsis* as the *purohitas* of king Sudasa. With the rise of kingship in the Indo-Gangetic plain the tradition underwent further transformation and the *rsis* became the *purohitas* in the Epics, the *Puranas* and the Upanishads. In them they are individualised and through them the Brahmanic hegemony is illustrated. Ancient Indian historical tradition regard them as real historical personages. For the relevant discussion see Rama Chandra Ghosha, *The Indo-Aryans their History Creed and Practice*, Calcutta 1881, pp. 52-67.

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Smrti

Smrti, identified as the popular oral tradition is regarded as the source of the *itihasa-purana* traditions and sacred literature of the later ages.[19] Smrti represent, the contents which are known and memorized.[20] In smrti there are two varieties of tradition – the closed tradition and the popular tradition.

A.   The closed Tradition

As part of the oral tradition *smrtis* are simple traditions of the small communities of Aryan language speaking groups. They are in the form of hymns that emphasise upon ritualistic order and practices. These were the binding forces of social groups.[21] Smrti-s were written in the later ages. They retain the ethos of solidarity of the Aryan language speaking groups. In the Indian context the Smrti-s that exist in written form at a later age are prescriptive. Smrti-s are regarded as the literature of memories which "tells the Hindus how to live in this world."[22] Smrti-s speak of norms within the context of a highly symbolic world.

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[19]   The popular tradition is termed as the 'open oral tradition.' They focus on the stories and the narratives. Romila Thapar, "Genealogies and oral tradition" in the *Methodology of the Use of Oral Sources in History*. Report of the First India Zimbabwe conference, Harare, 1989, p.21.

[20]   See the details in Romila Thapar, "Historical writing in Ancient India" in Romila Thapar (ed) *Ancient Indian Social history: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 113. Also see Pargiter F.E., *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, Delhi, 1962, p. 20.

[21]   The evidence of prayers as part of ritual is absent in the early *mandalas* of *Rig Veda*. The ritual status is a norm of later ages associated with the expansion of Aryan settlements. Ritual status is regarded as the basis of *varna* system. It is the chief mark of distinction between the Aryas and the Anaryas. For further details see Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, Delhi, 1990, pp. 21-69. In oral societies there was close affinity between social systems and religions. But usually in a literate religion far from reflecting social system in fact influence the aspects of social system. The relations between Scriptures and social structures are termed by Jack Goody as 'the Paradoxes of ascetism'. Jack Goody, *The Logic of writing and The Organisation of Society*, U.K., 1986, pp. 22-29. Rituals re regarded as capable of experiential rebirth as it involves body, senses, and mind.

It is supposed to exert a strong mental influence among the members of particular social group. For the psycho analytical discussions on rituals see Ariel Glucklich, *The sense of Adharma*, New York, 1994, pp. 28-34.

[22]   *Op. cit.* p. 12.

Symbolic imagination is an essential element to facilitate recollection.[23] The memories are rooted in the matrix of contemporary cultural and social milieu.[24]

Like all other traditions in India *Smṛti-s* too claim some king of affiliation to the Vedas. As some of the *Smṛti-s* are regarded as composed by the great *Acaryas* the *Smṛti-s* are considered as part of 'Vedic Parsimony.'[25] There are also traditions that narrate the individual memories of ancestors who lived before centuries.[26] These family traditions preserved information quite independent of any relation with political power. They assume significance in the society in the transitory stage to the system of *varna*, "where customs required the sanction of authority though not political authority."[27] They are memorized for the knowledge of *gotra*, which is essential in the lineage society, as the right to appropriate share in land and ritual status are determined by the lineage.[28] They also contain reminiscences of early ages, which could be termed as the

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[23] The language of the myths in the *Smṛti-s* speak of wives as fields. They speak of milky trees which mark the boundaries. Similarly the words deer, water tank etc. are symbols to designate ideas. The analysis of symbols in *Smṛti* is the major theme discussed by Ariel Glucklich. *Op cit.* p. 246.
  The relation between reality and myth is recognised by Roland Barthes. The language of myth is regarded as part of a complex semiological system. It is regarded as a message embedded in various associations. Roland Barthes. *Mythologies*, London. 1972, p. 32. Metaphor and analogy are regarded as the peculiar characteristics of myths. They are regarded as devices for the complex orderings of knowledge. For the psycho-analytical discussion on myths see Sudirkakar, *The Analyst and the Mystic*, New Delhi. 1991, pp. 65-69.

[24] *Op cit.* p. 72.

[25] This term is borrowed from Dayakrisha. He illustrates the contradictions and ambiguity in the discussions of scholars, as to the criterion of eligibility for the texts, to be incorporated in the corpus of Vedic literature. He urges. that a new way of looking at the Vedic texts is essential. His phenomenological enquiry in to the Veda, focus on how a Veda is formed as distinct from the usual enquiry of what is a Veda. For the relevant discussion on the positioning of *Smṛti* texts in the Vedic literature see Daya Krishna *Indian Philosophy Counter Perspective*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 125-138.

[26] The popular belief among the Aryans was that there existed forty-nine *gotras* among the early Aryan settlers. Each member was bound to know the name of the ancestors and the *gotra* to which he belonged. These were invoked in the fire cult.
  Rama Chandra Ghosha. *The Indo Aryans: Their History Creed and Practice* Calcutta, 1881, p. 80.

[27] Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*. New Delhi, 1990, p. 29.

[28] *Ibid.*

prehistoric survivals.[29] How the family traditions underwent considerable restructuring and became the main traditions focusing on chiefdoms and kingship are to be discussed later. Timeless historical vacuum is one of the significant features of the family traditions.[30]

B.   The Popular Tradition

The *Rigvedic Samhitas* are noted for its heterogeneous nature of themes. They incorporated multiple streams of parallel traditions. "The *Rig Veda* contains several bucolic, and heroic elements." "The hymns were not composed in the same age, or by the same poet, or in the same locality, not even in the same cultural environment."[31] They incorporated memories of pre-emigration. They had undergone 'an amount of wear and tear.'[32] They survive as archaic traits, in the form of references and epithets. The old home is referred to as *'Pratnakoas'* though the Geographical details of the region remain obscure. The reminiscences of the migratory route of different groups, conflicts and dangers are also indicated. "The migrating Aryan tribes were Pastoral groups. Migrations took many centuries. The settlements existed for shorter periods of a few years or longer periods of a few generations depending on the environment and accessibility to the best pasture. This might have led to conflicts."[33]

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[29]   O.H. De A. Wijesekera illustrates how the *Rig Veda* refers to the evolution of society among the early Āryan groups. The allusions and epithets retain several archaic traits dating from the early ages of migration. These archaic traits are regarded as the prehistoric survivals which are handed down through the oral traditions. This can be studied only through what the author designates as socio-semantic methodology. For the discussion on the Prehistoric survivals in *Rig Veda* see O.H. De A. Wijesekera, *Buddhist and Vedic studies*, Delhi, 1994, pp. 285-291.

[30]   Rama Chandra Ghosha, *The Indo Aryans: Their, History, Creed and Practice*, Calcutta, 1881, p. 88.

[31]   *Op cit.* p. 42.

[32]   *Ibid.*

[33]   Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 25.

These collective memories of conflicts are to be found in the popular tradition, which were later represented through different forms of literature. There existed diverse forms of representation in the interface between the preliterate and the literate society of the *Vedic* Age. Each of these forms - *gatha-s*, (songs) *narasamsi* (euology of heroes) *ākhyāna* (dramatic narrative) *vijaya, carita* and tales etc. is treated as a separate *genre*, which had its own peculiar linguistic structure, style of composition and theme. The historical tradition of early India existed in these forms of literature. The original tradition was oral and it belonged to the tribal society of the *Vedic* Age. It is difficult to define when one form of representation ended or another started.[34] "Yet *gatha* regarded as of later origin is believed to have existed by the middle of the First millennium B.C. or possibly earlier."[35]

Gatha-s (Songs)

Gatha is a *genre* which emerged out of parallel traditions in poetic form. The brevity of the songs was regarded as one of the common features associated with such songs in the traditional societies.[36] They were for recital or for singing. The refrain formula in the *gatha*-s reveals this. The songs are famous for the expression of feelings. They were not intended for the descriptive representation of past. They focused on an important event of the past and more than that they used to glorify the heroes associated with them. The events were generally successful raids, or cattle raids, or victory over the enemy, or the destruction of

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[34] Romila Thapar, "The First Millennium B.C. in Northern India" Romila Thapar (ed) *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, Bombay, 1995, p. 24.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] The brevity of Indian songs is compared to the songs of the tribes of New Guinea, Naga tribes, Zulu and the Brazilian Tribes. T. Hudson 'The Naga tribes of Manipur' quoted in Louisie Pound, *The poetic origins of Ballad*, New York, 1921, pp. 86-95.

the enemy. They were said to have occurred in the earliest age (*pura*).[37] The earliest of them might have belonged to early groups of *Aryans* as raiders and the later as the nomadic pastroalists in the north western regions of India. The hostility of them to cities and the references to encounters indicated the conflicts between the two different groups.[38] The simplicity of language reveal the origin of the *gatha-s* from the humble ordinary folk. As the compilation of *Rig Veda Samhita* took place only several centuries later, it was able to appropriate only vague memories of primitive Aryan raiders. Thus only fragments of *gatha-s* are available in the *Rigvedic Samhita*. Immortality was assigned to the ancestors who were placed in cosmogeny, where Indra and his attendants Maruts and later Agni were the key figures.[39] The Indra songs in the form of *stutis* which form a considerable portion of the Vedas illustrate this. The primitive profession of raiding is attributed to Indra and his attendants the Maruts. Indra is described as the leader of battles. He is described as having plundered booty from *Vrtra* (*yo Vrtraya Sinam atra abharisyat*).[40] He used to bear away all spoils (*dhanabharate*).[41] The later interpreter Savana regarded the term '*dhana*' as spoil, or booty. The repeated occurrences of the term '*bhara*' in the early sections of *Rigveda Samhita* were regarded as related to the winning, or capturing of booty. Later the term '*bhara*' was associated with warriors or fighters. It was employed to designate the Bharatas as a tribe in the

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[37] C. Narayanan Nambuthiri, (trans) *Rig Veda Vol. II* Trichur, 1989, 1: V 24.

[38] The hostility for towns and folk is regarded as one of the important elements in Pastoral Poetry. Frank Keramode, *Poetry Narrative, History*, London, 1990, p. 30.

[39] The affinity between the representation of Heroes and the social structure and how the dire needs of the society are reflected in traditions are discussed by Gordon Childe in the context of Greek city states. The depiction of Zeus as the chief of the Panthenon is regarded as modelled after warlords of Greece acknowledging the Suzeranity of the king of Myceno Gordon Childe, *What happened in History*, London, 1942, p.22.

[40] C. Narayanan Nambuthiri, (trans) *Rig Veda Vol.II*, Trichur, 1989, V2:30.

[41] *Op. cit.* 1. V 32.

later sections of *Rigveda*.[42] They were regarded as *gramah* or War bands who played an active role in the Battle of Ten Kings. Indra was described as mounting the horse (*Adhi-atisthat*). The horses of the Maruts are said to have seats on their backs (*Prasthe Sadah*).[43] Indra is the destroyer of cities and armies[44] and the slayer of the *asuras* such as Vritra, Samhaba and Sushka who were described as *anasa* (tongueless-having an alien speech).[45] Among the Pastoral groups cattle and grazing ground are the causes of conflict. There are references to the encounters of Indra with such *anasa* like Namuchi and Valen and how Indra protected the people of *Rugmadesa*.[46] The use of pronouns 'us' 'we' in the songs reveal tribal society. In the tribal society of vis wealth was distributed among members of the tribe. Later wealth was distributed only among selected groups. The *Danastuti-s* in *Rigvedic Samhita* intersect these two stages in the redistributive system of tribal society in the early *Vedic* Age. *Danastuti-s* also refer to tribal leaders such as Sahadeva, Somaka, Vidathi and Rina Sanjaya. The names are associated with their ancestors. Later this became the model for genealogy, which indicates the tendency to legitimise rights of authority. The *Danastuti-s* belong to the later ages. When redistributive system included only selected groups, the Kshatriya and the Brahmans. The objects of

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[42] O.H. De A. Wijesekara believes that considerable progress has not been achieved in the interpretations of the *Rig Veda* as studies on the *Rig Veda* by Max Muller and Grassmann still continue to influence the later scholars. He envisages a new approach which is termed as 'socio-semantic methodology.' He illustrates the pre-historic survivals in *Rig Veda*. For further details on the discussion of such primitive survivals in *Rig Veda* see O.H. De A. Wijesekera, *Buddhist and Vedic Studies*, Delhi, 1994, pp. 286-291.

[43] C. Narayan Nambuthiri, (trans) *Rig Veda* Vol. III & VII, Trissur, 1989 Vo. 3, 2:V. 26, 6:V 72, V. 7 1. V 41, 2:V.33.

[44] *Rig Veda* Vol. III V2:17, V 28, V 42: *Op cit*. V4: V 25.

[45] *Rig Veda* Vol IV 8: V 19.

[46] *Rig Veda* Vol III 4: V 18, v 19, V 25.

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wealth were cows, and horses.[47] Later land was also included. In the early ages of tribal chiefdoms, *gatha-s* were associated with *magatas* and *sutas*. They were the hereditary custodians of tradition.[48] The open structure of tradition had the possibility for numerous additions, revisions and interpolations.[49] By the first millennium A.D. the tradition was appropriated by the priest composers. The priests were regarded as those who offered prayers to gods for success in battles and cattle raids.[50] Thus individual poems and cycles of poem found their way in the epic poem, which became the storehouse of the entire old bardic poetry."[51] Later *gatha* was employed to designate epic narrative. Mahabharata began its existence as a simple epic narrative (*gatha*). The *gathas* were recited on occasions of performance of rituals, particularly *Aswamedha* sacrifice with year long preliminary. The leaders sang and others followed.[52] They were regarded as the legends of gods and heroes. They were recited during the one year long preliminary celebration of the *Asvamedha* sacrifice. The recital lasted for a regular succession of every ten days.[53] Two lute players the Brahmana and the

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47 The notion of gift-exchange, the changes which occur in the concept in the later age and how it is utilised in building up the pattern of hierarchy in terms of wealth and status in the early Vedic age is discussed by Romila Thapar. For the relevant discussion on the socio-economic functions of *Dana* and its transformation from *Daksina* see Romila Thapar, 'Ancient Indian Social History *(some Interpretations)* New Delhi, 1990, pp. 105-120.

48 The contexts in Mahabharata which reveals Sanjaya the *suta* as the messenger of the king Dridharashtra, and as the narrator of the war are regarded as illustrating sutas as custodians of the tradition. Talboys Wheeler, Mahabharata *with Reference to Early Vedic Age*, Delhi, 1953, p. 130.

49 Romila Thapar, "Genealogies and the oral tradition" in the *Methodology of the Uses of Oral sources in History* Report of the First India Zimbawe Conference, Harare, 1989, p. 15.

50 The magico religious function is the primary function involved in exchange of gifts in the tribal communities of early Vedic age. Later the channels of redistribution are limited to the Brahamana and the Kshatriyas. Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History (some interpretations)*. New Delhi, pp. 105-120.

51 Dandekar (ed) *Mahabharata Revisited*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 129.

52 The references to the singing of *Udgatha* in rituals to defeat the Asuras indicate the origin of *gathas*. It also refers to the practice of communal singing. V. Balakrishnan (trans) *Brahadarenyam Upanishad*, Kottayam, 1971, Chap. IVP10. The care taken for the harmonious recitation in rituals is regarded as indicative of the solidarity among the groups while the focus on individualistic tone in the western music is regarded as reflexive of their social matrix. For further details see Madhuri Sondhi and Mary Walker (ed) *Ecology, Culture and Philosophy*, Delhi, 1988, p. 37.

53 Dandkar (ed) *Mahabharata Revisited*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 47.

Kshatriya were also present on the occasion. The former glorified the generosity of the princes while the latter extols the heroic deeds of the princes. There were also *gatha-s* to be sung at domestic ceremonies. Thus *gatha-s* originated from the memories of predatory raids and struggles for settlements. They were retained in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana in the new forms of *Carita, Vijaya* and *Katha*. Though the motif of combat was common to them, they were different in terms of peculiarities of structure. *Narasamsi* was another *genre* that existed in the *Vedic* Age.

Narasaḿsi

Nārāsaḿsi-s were regarded as the songs in praise of human heroes "Poetry was identified as the basic mechanism of transmission and prestige as the chief motive."[54] The genesis of Nārāsaḿsi was from family traditions which narrated the victories of a few individuals. Though the Aryans had the status of elite through ritual status there also existed powerful *anarya* (non-Aryan) groups who controlled the land and resources.[55] There were occasions of encounters and conflicts with the expansion of the Aryan settlements. This took place in the central and the eastern regions of India in the second half of the First

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[54] Rosalind Thomas, *Oral tradition and written record in classical Athens*, London, 1989, p. 97.
[55] The wealth of the powerful groups among Anaryas is referred to in the early *mandalas* of *Rig Veda*. They are spoken of as *Dasas* who live in towns (*ayasih purah*) and organised in clans (*Visah*) 'but they are spoken of with contempt as *Krishnatvac, anasa* and *mridhra Vac*. The *Ajas, Sigrus, Ikshus, Kikutas, Panis* are regarded as the tribes of non-Aryans though the details remain obscure. But the later literature spoke of them as non kin labourers (*dasabhritya*) indicating the victories achieved by the Aryans in their expansion in the eastern regions, where most of these groups were in the stage of pliestocene period. The Indologists Zimmer, Keith and Oldenberg to located the various tribes mentioned in *Rig Veda* on the basis of the geographical information furnished by the Vedic literature. In the early studies on Aryans in India the concern is for finding out the original home and the early Aryan settlements. For the detailed account of Aryan settlements in India. see Pusalker, "The Aryans in India." *The Vedic Age* Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1951, pp. 248-255.

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millennium B.C.[56] Several non-kshatriya groups wielded authority in these regions, epitomized as *mleccha desa*. With the expansion of Aryan settlements, the powerful among the *Anaryas*, were conferred the status of *Khatriya* through a complex network of appropriation.[57] The songs of victories which existed among the non Kshatriya groups[58] were interwoven with the family traditions of Aryans in the heroic songs of later ages which are designated as narasamsi-s. These can be illustrated through the heroic traditions associated with Jarasandha, Kamsa, sisupala, and the victory of Gandharvas over Duryodhana and Karna. The content and basis of family traditions are usually viewed as a minor adjunct to historiography."[59] Like the *gatha-s*, iteration was an important feature of narasamsi-s. In the poetical form they also had mnemonic devices which helped the people to memorise the tradition. This revealed their origin in the preliterate society. What makes them a distinct *genre* from *Gatha-s* is to be sought in terms of its functions and intentionality.

The heroic songs (naraaamsi-s) were recited on occasions of ritual sacrifices like *Asvamedha* and *Rajasuya*. They created an image of legendary ancestors. There were later crystallized in the notion of *Vamsa*, which came to be

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[56] Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 145.

[57] Appropriation and restructuring are regarded as the operative basis of this complex network termed as 'Aryanisation/sanskritization.' The process is described through the categories of religion, society, culture and tradition. The key role played by tradition in assimilating the non-Kshatriya groups who enjoyed political and economic status is to be fund in the representations which link them with legendary figures. Linking the rulers with divinity was unthought of at this stage. For further details on the social mobility in ancient India. *Op.Cit.* pp. 121-149.

[58] Songs are regarded as the only *genres* of representation known to the Dravidians. The different *genres* of representation such as *gatha-s*, *akhyana-s*, nāraśmsi and carithas are regarded as emerging from the interaction with the Aryans. They are regarded as incorporating both the elements of non-brahminical and brahminical literature. For the detailed account of *gatha-s* and Carithas in Malayalam. See. T.M. Chummar, *Padya Sahithya Charithram*, Kottayam, 1936, p. 178 and also see N. Krishna Pillai, *Kairaliyude katha*, Kottayam, 1958, p. 270.

[59] Rosalind Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens*, London, 1989, p. 96.

associated with rulers. Heroic songs underwent several additions and hence numerous versions existed to suit various occasions.[60] They were characterised by poetic imagination to excite emotions in the audience.[61] Memories of heros, were mixed up with individual experiences.

Ākhyāna (dramatic Narratives)

The origin of ākhyāna is traced to the dialogue-hymns in *Rig Veda*. This refers to some dramatic mode of delivery, a mode of transmission that originated from the tribal songs. So it was treated as an improvisation of Tribal songs.[62] Dialogues in the stories of Krishna, Duryodhana and Arjuna seeking help from Krishna in Mahabharata are regarded as indicating affiliation to the literary form of ākhyāna.[63] Thus the structure of ākhyāna made it a specific *genre* it developed out of the elements of oral and dramatic conditions which combined songs and dialogue. The narrative element was one of the primary features of its structure. There are single ākhyānas such as *Ambopākhyānam Srnjayopākhyānam Nalopākhyānam* and *Manthapalopkhyānam*. There are also cycles of stories as illustrated by *Udangopākhyānam Sundopasundopākhyānam*. The ākhyānas have a tendency to incorporate religious ideas.[64] Elements of aristocratic values, kinship relations, memories of heroic deeds of ancestors, archaic traits in the

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[60] Dandekar. (ed) *Mahabharata Revisited*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 134.

[61] Louisie Pound. *The poetic origins of ballad*, U.K., 1921, p. 87 Akhyanas are to be located in the context of the emergence of kingdoms after the amalgamation of Tribes, between the first millennium B.C and the mid first millennium A.D. The areas of poetic imagination and alliteration are assigned to the professional poets (bards) who recited them on specific occasions, or for popular entertainment.

[62] Louisie Pound. *The poetic origins of Ballad*, London, 1921, p.99.

[63] Tolboy Wheeler. *History of Vedic Age with Reference to Mahabharata*, New Delhi, 1953, p. 286.

[64] The old English tradition combined in themselves the heroic tradition and the spirit of christian religion. They were regarded as Pagan traditions in the garb of christian religion. For further details see David M. Zesmer. *Guide to English Literature*, New York, 1961, pp. 73-81.

form of myths are successfully interwoven with Brahminical values, to promote the significance of the Brahmins in the later ages. The simplest and homogenous *Akhyanas* can be regarded as of an earlier age. The complex *Ākhyāna* containing heterogeneous subplots could regarded as Brahmanic compilations of the later ages. As part of the bardic origin, the *Ākhyānas* are appropriated in the Mahabharata. They appear as stories told by *rsis* or the celestial devotee Narada to the different characters, to suit various contexts.[65]

Vijaya and *Jaya* are two traditional patterns of historical literature in ancient India. *Vijaya/Jaya* are about specific occasions of conflict and the celebration of victory. *Rajasanjaya Vijayam*[66] in the Mahabharata described the war between the Pandavas and the kings (*nrupas*) who were assembled in the palace of the king of Pancala. *Digjaya*[67] in the Mahabharata narrated the Victory of the Pandavas over all the lands. *Vijaya/Jaya* which had descriptions of exaggerated royal splendour rather pointed out an advanced age of monarchical states, when these traditional forms of historical literature were appropriated in the Epic, with ample modifications. They were designed to project the heroic valour of the Pandavas. They are eulogistic in character. The '*digjaya*' gives a detailed account of various monarchical states such as Kalinga, Vanga, Magadha, Kekeya, Vaisali, Chera, Chola and Pandya. The increasing significance assigned to conquest of land is visible in *digjaya*. Thus qualifies *digjaya* was an interpolation. *Vijaya/Jaya* revealed themselves as patterns of historical literature

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[65] Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 73-81. Also see, Pusalkar, "The Aryans in India," *The Vedic Age*, Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1951, p. 251.
[66] K. Achutha Varrier, (ed) *Sree* Mahabharatam, Kollam, 1956, The *Sambhava Parvam*, pp. 129-130.
[67] *Op. cit.* pp. 169-172.

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improvised, upon the *gatha-s* and *Narasamsi-s*. They are the forerunners of the chronicles of royalty which are further elaborated upon as historical biographies in the later ages of feudal chiefdoms. These *genres* existed during the medieval period. Like other traditional patterns of historical literature, *Vijaya* and *Jaya* shared the ethos of the great epics which centred round specific persons and or events.

The *itihasa* Tradition

The Ramayana derived from the syllables *Rama* and *ayanä* (adventures) implied the meaning-adventures of Rama. The principal characters were represented as bipolars. *Rama*, the tapsvi turned ruler of Ayodhya was the embodiment of Aryadharma while Ravana, the räksasaturned *tapsvi* was the oppressor and terror of *Aryadharma*. The theme of *Rämayana* if reduced to its nucleus, is the expedition and war which Rama wages against Ravana. This core was popularly known as *Ramakatha*.[68] It was the poem formed and transmitted by the rhapsodists as oral tradition for centuries. The existence of faint traces of the Rama legend in *Vedic* literature is recognized.[69] The ancient Buddhist texts of the *Tipitaka* contained traces of *Ramakatha* as a popular song for special occasions. Mahabharata embodies *Ramakatha* as a form of recital associated with rituals and sacrifices. On such occasions the heroic exploits of sixteen kings (*Sodasarajo päkhyana*) were recited of which Rama was one.[70] The *Anushtup*

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[68] It is generally accepted that *Ramakatha* was the earliest form in which the story of Rama existed. The *Ramakatha* is regarded as well known in the early Vedic Ages. The different versions of *Ramakatha* and its transition to *Ramayana* are discussed by Camil Bulcke. For details, see *Abhayadev*, (trans) Ramakatha, Trissur, 1989, pp. 40-48.

[69] Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, p.34.

[70] *Op. cit.* p. 12.

verse, the most frequent and useful form of verse in poetry is employed in Ramayana. It is in the form of sloka which has four caranas which literally means feet (lines). The refrain between the second and the third line, and the variations in the length of the syllables in the second half of the *sloka* reveal that they are intended for recital rather than reading.[71] "The compound phrase used for the two sons of Sita, *'Kusilavau'* literally refers to bards or actors or rhapsodists (*kavyopajivinho*). The Ramayana composed by Valmiki is said to have been taught to Kusa and Lava who recite it to their father."[72] Thus the *Ramakatha* existed as oral tradition for centuries.

The Representation of *Ramakatha* in Hetrodox Religions

Ramakatha was appropriated by the Buddhist tradition in the form of different *Jataka* stories.[73] These representations focussed either on the story of Rama in the kingdom or the episode of exile.[74] The *Dasratha Jataka* and the *Sama Jataka* were concerned with the events of the kingdom especially of the reign of Dasaratha. The origin myths narrated in them deserve attention. The focus was on the Koliyas, the Sakyas, and the Licchavis and their links to the *Iksvaku* lineage. These tribes are associated with the rise of Buddhism. The details of the kingdoms of kosala and vidhea which loomed large in the *Ramayana* were absent in the Buddhist traditions. The republics are legitimised while in Ramayana there is no reference to Buddhism or republics. The *Paumacariyam* of vimalasuri recast the *Ramakatha* in accordance with the

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71 Ralph Griffith, *Ramayana of Valmiki*, Banares, 1985, p. xi.
72 Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, p. 5.
73 *Op. cit.* p. 1.
74 *Ibid.*

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values of Jainism. The geographical location of this Jain tradition is the Vindhyan region particularly the Narmada and Tapti valleys and Western India to the north of the Godavari river.[75] The Buddhist and Jain traditions restructured *Ramakatha* by focusing on the motif of exile[76] which was so common in the kshatriya traditions. Thus these versions are significant for:

a)   Intention – the Buddhist and Jain traditions wanted to spread their social values. So they put forward an inverse representation of *Ramakatha* by appropriating the motif of exile, popular in the kshatriya traditions.

b)   Sanctioned traditions

The origin myths are about the Koliyas the Sakyas and the Licchavis. They are traced to the *Iksvāku* lineage. "In the origin myths exile is permanent and the place of exile becomes the nucleus of a new *Janapada* with its own city."[77] Thus the Buddhist traditions embody several layers of consciousness of the branching off by the junior lineage. The links to the *Iksavaku* lineage, legitimise the non kshatriya tribes associated with Buddhism. The Buddhist

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[75]   *Ibid.*

[76]   The version of *Ramakatha* in the Buddhist and Jain traditions are regarded as the 'embroidered versions.' They are motivated representations, which project brahminical rituals as anti-thesis. They are for legitimising the kshatriya status of tribal cheifships associated with Buddhism. This indicates the possibility that the *Ramakathä* was one among the kshatriya traditions For further details. see Abayandev, (trans) *Ramakatha*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1989. Allahabad. 1971, pp. 21-25.
         Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 110.

[77]   Exile is associated with origin. They do not represent any specific event. But they point out the beginnings through allegorical expressions. This is a popular form of expression which has different connotations Jan Vansina narrates how the reference to the breaking up of a branch in some of the traditions of Africa indicates the branching off the lineages in the tribe. They are associated with the layers of consciousness of the past, though the details recede into subconscious. For further details on the trajectories in oral tradition, see Jon Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A study in Historical Methodology*, London, 1961, p. 74.

Jatakas speak of videhas as one of the confederate clans of vaiji oligarchy. The licchavis were represented as the most powerful *ganasanha*. There are no descriptions of republics. Thus they exhibit the features of an official tradition.

The transition from *Ramakatha* to Ramayana

Ramakatha which existed as oral tradition was altered or additions were made by each rhapsodist to suit the occasion or to the taste of the patrons whom they served.[78]

> "As in the case with all primitive epochs around this account of war as a nucleus, have gathered elements of every king drawn from traditions, the ideas, beliefs, the myths and the symbols of that civilization in the midst of which it arose and by the weaving in and arranging of all these vast elements and it became the complete and faithful expression of an ancient period."[79]

It also appropriates the social values, norms and ethos of the dominant culture in each locality. This explains the origin of the different recensions of Ramayana: (1) Northern; (2) North-Western; (3) Eastern; (4) Southern. They differ widely to the extent that about a third of the verses in each recension does not occur in the other. The northern recension attempts to infuse the spirit of Brahmanic culture as an index of civilization. New episodes related to kings and rsis are added as illustrated by the stories of Rsyasringa and Sagara. By the time these recensions came to be written down, they further incorporated legends of Surhasepa, the descent of the Ganges, the churning of the ocean, Ahalya, Parasurama, Trisanku and so on, which resemble the same legends narrated in the *puranas*. These representations reflect assimilation of a variety of animistic cults, and beliefs

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[78] Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom,* Bangalore, 1972, p. 8.
[79] Ralph Griffith, *Ramayana of Valmiki*, Benares, 1895, p. xxviii.

through vaisnavism. This was associated with the formation of kingdoms in the tribal territories.[80] Hence the *Balakanda* and the *Uttarakanda* in the revised edition of Ramayana are regarded as later additions in the form of a *kavya*.[81] The *Uttarakanda* narrates the renunciation of Sita, the banishment of Laxmana, and the termination of Rama's life along with his brothers on the banks of the river Sarayu. It reveals the strong bonds of kinship visible in the epic literature. Thus "Ramayana ends in disappointment and sorrow so characteristic of the epic literature which overshadows the cheerfulness of valour and courage."[82]

The Studies on Ramayana

Several scholars made valuable contributions to the studies on Ramayana. The pioneer Lassen pointed to the development of Ramakatha into epic in three stages in terms of space. According to him the core did not carry the narrative beyond the exile of Rama to the Himalayas. The second stage shifted the place of exile to the Godavari region which incorporates the accounts of his encounter with the aborigines. The third amplification occurred with the expansion of knowledge of geography. This further shifted the actions of Rama to Lanka. The transition from *Ramakatha* to Ramayana is regarded as reflecting the different stages of the Aryan conquest of the South.[83] Lassen was followed by Weber, Muir, Frederich and Monier Williams. They discussed about the genesis of the

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[80] Romila Thapar, Exile and Kingdom, Bangalore, 1972, p. 18. How the assimilation of fertility cult is reflected in the myth is illustrated by D.D. Kosambi in this analytical study of the myth of Pururavas and Urvasi. This reveals that the text contains several layers of development. For details, see D.D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality*, Bombay, 1962, pp. 23-32.
[81] M. Krishnamachariar, A History of Classical Sanskrit Literature, Delhi, 1989, p.17.
[82] G.H. Bhatt, *The Valmiki Ramayana*, Baroda, 1961, p. xiii.
[83] A.D. Pusalkar, *Studies in the Epics and Puranas*, Bombay, 1955, p. 32.

different recensions of Ramayana, the similarities among them and the influence of Greece on the epic. The assumptions about the affiliation of Ramayana to the Homeric epics and the Aryanisation of the South characterised their discussions of Ramayana. The nationalists attempted to highlight the superiority of ancient Indian polity to justify political self-determination.[84] The quest for fundamental culture inspired the social reformers in the 19th and 20th centuries to focus on the concepts of *Aryadharma* in Ramayana as the source of eternal social values.

This transition from *Ramakatha* to Ramayana if viewed in terms of social situations, involves

a) the first stage in which *Ramakatha* is enlarged by incorporating numerous layers of popular tales and heroic traditions which reflect the general experience of the pastoral age. The presence of tribal elements is regarded as preserving the cultural continuity;

b) the second stage of interpolations, which reflects the consciousness of the new settlements in the eastern and central regions and the experiences of encounters which correspond to the transition from the pastoral age to the age of agriculture;

c) the third stage of the representation arising from·the elements of second urbanisation as evidenced by descriptions of cities;

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[84] The internal evidence offered by the text was examined. Their concern was to prove the existence of a state system with external values. This approach is best illustrated in Law N.N., *Aspects of Ancient Indian Polity*, London, 1921; and Ghoshal U.N., *A History of Hindu Political Theories*, London, 1927.

d) improvisation to transform it to the formal standard of a *kavya* through focusing on sentiments and social values which corresponds to an advanced literate society and monarchical states.

The Historical Basis of Ramayana

In tracing the historical basis of Ramayana, Weber pointed out that the characters represented certain events and circumstances. It is pointed out that Sita (the furrow) is referred to in the *Rig Veda* as an object of worship, so it represents the Aryan agriculture. Hence it is regarded as the personified representation of the spread of agriculture towards the south of the peninsula.[85] Ramayana is regarded as an elaborated version of nature myths. Ramayana is regarded as the allegorical representation of the destruction of the chalcolithic culture by the Iron Age cultures.[86] This epic is regarded as not representing any specific age or specific historial fact but as the embodiment of 'general experiences of different groups extending over centuries,[87] especially when the society went through a crisis or major upheaval. An understanding of oral traditions, its components, the modes of transmission and the general correlation between the literature and archaeological finds in terms of social context are considered necessary for detecting the layers of the epics.[88]

It has been generally admitted that the original Ramayana consists of five *kandas* (II to VI). The *Balakanda* and the *Uttarakanda* are later additions.

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[85]   A.D. Pusalkar, *Studies in the Epics and the Puranas*, Bombay, 1955, p. xx,
[86]   T.H. Sankalia, *Ramayana Myth or Reality*, New Delhi, 1973, p. 247.
[87]   Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, p. 5.
[88]   Romila Thapar, *Recent Approaches to the Study of Early Indian History*, Bombay, 1995, p. 29.

Event in kingdom and forest are identified as constituting the kernel of the epic. Descriptions which are stereotyped and repetition of events are regarded as universal features of epic literature. The women characters Kekeyi and Sita are represented as motivating the crucial events of the epic. These subplots reveal the fragments of popular tale.[89] The intrigues of Kekeyi and the banishment of the legitimate heir is significant. This is a break from the tradition and contrary to the accepted norm.[90] This is an index to the transitional stage in the law of primogeniture which indicates a society where the rights on land are clearly established. The emphasis on the patrilineal primogeniture suggests that: (a) there is also an alternative primogeniture; (b) the patrilineal primogeniture emerges in a new powerful group as the differentiating feature from other groups which are henceforth considered as lesser (*candravamsa*). In *candravamsa* the distribution and expansion of the junior lineage are recorded. The Ramayana speaks of the territories of the sons of Rama, and his brothers in the *Uttarakanda*, which is the juxtaposition of the state system of the later ages, with the branching off junior lineages in tribal territories in the middle Ganga valley. The theme of exile symbolizes.

a) the purity of lineage of the new ruling groups because of ultimate descent from single set of parents.[91]

b) migrations motivated by demographic growth, or tensions within the initial group resulting in the process of fission so common in the lineage systems.[92]

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[89] K.V. Sreenivasa Iyengar, *Asian Variations in Ramayana*, Delhi, 1981. p. 67.
[90] Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, p. 11.
[91] Romila Thapar. *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 77.
[92] *Op. cit.* p. 78.

The Text of Ramayana and the social Roots of Representation

The Ramayana which is regarded as part of the ancient historical tradition derives its material from several strata of an ancient lore.[93] A close examination of the text reveals the core and periphery of the activities of Rama. These are the forest (*Aranyaa*) and the kingdom (*Rajya*).[94] For the purpose of the continuity of the text these are arranged alternatively. The forest as the core is presented invariably in all the chapters (II to IV) which are regarded as constituting the original sections of text. The early sections of exile abounds in asramas. The asramas of Bharadwaja, Vashishta, Valmiki, Adya are regarded as the abodes of *Rama* in exile. The names bear the traces of later additions. How they all constitute the brahminical discourse is to be discussed later. The asramas reveal proximity to the settled areas. It is justified by the description that Rama reached the frontier of Kosala and entered *Aranya* after the journey of three days.[95] The forests were the habitats of *rsis*, the *vanaprasthas* and *sanyasis*. The Ramayana reveals their status as ascetics and not as purohitas. The *rākasasas*, even Ravana, are described as the oppressor of ascetics, and *tapas* and not purohitas. Hence these different groups are employed to designate the Aryan language speaking groups who are differentiated from others through the ritual status. The subplot, illustrates the deeds of Rama who accompanies Visvāmitra as the protector. This points out the dependency of these groups[96] later designated as brahmanas, on the chief of the vis. The non-didactic portions of the text reveal them as dependent

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[93] Romila, Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 295.
[94] Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, p. 24.
[95] *Op. cit.*
[96] U.N. Ghosal, *A History of Hindu Political Theories*, U.K. 1927, pp. 64-69.

on those in power. The didactic sections affirm the dependency of the ruler on *purohita*. This is an index of the mobilisation of the two groups – the Brahamanas and the Kshatriyas as the power elite[97] in later ages. The origin of purohita was somewhere with the beginnings of *varna*.[98] The text reveals the absence of Brahmana-sponsored rituals and depicts the ruler as performing rituals as the chief of the vis. To this are added the reflections of the social context, when the Brahamana has become a dominant ally of the power elite which is visible, in the *Balakanda* and *Uttarakanda* of the text. The different in-themes of didactic sections reveal the transition to *varna* system and also to the complex plural society of hierarchies. Ramayana reveals an age where there were occasions for usurpation. "Bharata argues against his being made king by referring to the rule of primogeniture and this is reiterated by Vasistha who recited the *Iksvāku* lineage to demonstrate the succession of the eldest son.[99] This is an index of the change to the new rule of primogeniture which has not yet become well established. The kshatriya traditions in Mahabharata also reveal exile. Exile is the allegorical representation of the provisions for those excluded from the throne. The *puranas* do not refer to exile. They mention only the name of the Crown prince as such or they state the number of other princes.[100] Another alternative is that the princes can live jointly as illustrated in Mahabharata.

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[97] *Op. cit.*, p. 66.
[98] *Op. cit.*, p. 67.
[99] Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, p. 18.
[100] Ghoshal U.N., *A History of Hindu Political Theories*, U.K., 1927, pp. 64-69.

There were octennial, triennial and annual tenures.[101] "They retained assumptions about the past and also underpinned the social relations of the present."[102] It has been said that "the Ramayana is a symbolic depiction of the dominance of the landlords (with their God Rama) over the peasants (Hanuman) or that it represents the conflict between agriculturists and food gatherers.[103] In historical terms Ramayana is described as the juxtaposition between monarchical state systems and tribal chiefdoms prior to the emergence of the state.[104]

It is mentioned that the route of the journey of Rama when banished from Ayodhya, is through the mid-Gangetic valley tot he Southwest.[105] The gifts given by Guha, the chief of the *Nisada-vaṃsa* to Bharata and by Sabari to Rama are tribal products roots, fruit & fish. They suggest a food gathering society, less advanced than pastoralism.[106] Larger forests like *Maharanyaka* are mentioned in the later sections of exile. There are descriptions of encounter with alien groups which are described in expressions of horror and contempt such as *Nisachara*, *Rakṣasa* and *Vanara*. The picture revealed by archaeology is that Dandakaranya was the abode of a wide range of tribes, such as the Bhils, the Gonds, the korkus, santals, and different linguistic groups. The region was the centre of chalcolithic culture which can be dated to the third millennium B.C.[107] From the mid-second millennium B.C. onwards groups of the Aryan language speaking immigrants

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[101] This was regarded as prevailing in Rome, Sparta Lagos of South Nigeria and Hawai. The king at the end of the term was either deposed or put to death in an elaborate ritual or passed through some substituted ceremony. While among the Aryan speaking groups in India this was absent.

[102] Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 296.

[103] D.D. Rosambi, *Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1956, p. 40.

[104] Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, p. 22.

[105] "From early times the hill and forest belt was crossed by routes linking Ganga valley with coasts and with the Deccan plateau," Allchin, *Origins of a Civilisation*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 250.

[106] Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, p. 24.

[107] *Ibid.*

began to filter into the belt.[108] The expressions of horror associated with alien

groups indicate occasions of conflicts with them. These encounters took place in

the contexts of encroachment of tribal territories. The infiltration is associated

with the transition of lineages to kingdoms. Demographic growth, technological

skills inadequate to sustain the population of the initial kin groups, and the

consequent hostilities might have been the causal factors behind the acquisitive

attitude towards the tribal territories.[109] The coexistence of chalcohthic and

agricultural elements in the Eastern and Central regions is recognised.[110] Some of

the Aryan language speaking groups would have won power by force of arms.[111]

In the descriptions of the battles and encounters the weapons used by Rāma are

bows and arrows (astras). The soldiers guarding Lanka carry swords while

Ravana and his sons have magical weapons. The list of weapons are similar to

the puranic lists which can be ascribed to human fantasies. The weapons used by

the Vanaras indicate the Mesolithic phase in the regions. In the centuries that

followed the rivalry of the tribes and the new groups was resolved by

intermarriage, cultural acculturation,[112] and constitution of social norms in

accordance with the requirements of the mode of production and appropriation.

The result of this interaction is a new class of acculturated Aryans who

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[108] Ibid.

[109] Romila Thapar, From Lineage to State, New Delhi, 1990, p. 76-78.

[110] Allchin, Origins of Civilisation, New Delhi, 1997, p. 244.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Vaishnavism is regarded as the symbolic representation of acculturation. This was effected through appropriation of the local cults especially the fertility cults with fabricated connections to the dominating culture of the Aryan speaking groups. For the relevant discussion see Romila Thapar, Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 296-305. The reflection of cultural acculturation in the traditions is analysed by D.D. Kosambi in his analytical study of the tradition of Pururavas and Urvasi. Here he identifies the different layers which denote the transition. For further details, see Kosambi D.D., Myth and Reality, Bombay, p. 23-32. This process is studied in terms of relations between the power elite and the commons. It is argued that this process reflects itself in tradition in accordance with the changes in production and appropriation of surplus. For further details, see Ramendra Nath Wani, Social Roots of Religion in Ancient India, Delhi, 1986, p. xiv.

maintained that they were of Aryan descent. These societies were complex as they consisted of plural ethnic elements. The class of acculturated Aryans who had power named their chiefdoms after their ancestral tribes.[113] The ksatriya was largely an imagined status appropriated by new ruling families and sanctified by dependent priests. The emphasis in the *Uttarakanda* on the values of kingdom and monarchy as the legitimised form has its counterpart in Mahabharata. "This was established by seeking lineage connections with one of the two major lineages the *Suryavaṃśa* or the *Candravaṃśa* or some other status, conferring cosmic origin such as the *Agni-kula*.[114] The descent lists mentioned in the *Balakanda* are brief. They are elaborated upon in the genealogical sections of the later *puranas*. The *Visnu Purana* speaks of the *Ramayana* in the genealogical sections on the *Iksvākus*.[115] The *puranic* genealogies trace the origin of the *Iksvaku* from the flood legends. Here *Iksvāku* figures as the eldest son of the seventh Manu. The absence of the legends of flood in the Rāmayana reveal that this component of historical tradition, designed to mark the beginnings of *vaṃśa* was a phenomenon un-thought of in the society at the time of the compilation of epic. Hence *vaṃśa* which knit together the reminiscences of lineage and the legitimacy of the ruling elite and rights in the land has not been fully evolved. The society was having the *varna* system. The Vaisyas were the chief producers and the Sudras constituted a section of the labour force. They were only functional groups. In the economy of the post-Vedic Age there was the expansion of agriculture, arts, drafts and trade making the society stratified. These processes coincided with the formation of states.[116] The chief producers of

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[113] Allchin. *Origins of a Civilisation*, New Delhi, p. 248.
[114] Romila Thapar. *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, p. 26.
[115] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.
[116] Ramendranath Wandi, *Social Roots of religion in Ancient India*. Delhi, 1986, p. xvi.

social goods in this age were the Vaisyas, Sudras and *Dasa* but the ksatriyas who expropriated the surplus dominated the state. They gradually established their ownership of the surplus and controlled its distribution."[117] There was the proliferation of endogamous *Jati* subdivisions. This was explained as an articulation of inter-varna hypergamy. The elaboration of *varna* division by the complex hierarchy of *Jatis* and the social tensions arising from this context are well reflected in the subplot which narrates the duties of the king to-Bharata. One of the duties prescribed is "the prevention of the mixing of castes and the maintenance of *varna dharma*. It refers to a tense situation of the dichotomy between the Aryan and the mleccha existed.[118] The descriptions of Ayodhyä and Kosala, the gifts handed over to Bharata and Hanuman "even if allowing for poetic exaggeration, suggest a fairly developed economy."[119] "The archaeology of the Ganges plain shows that the earliest urbanisation dates back to the period of the Northern Black Polished ware of the mid-first millennium B.C. These descriptions of Ayodhya would date to a period subsequent to that.[120]

The assessment of the text of *Ramayana* in terms of historiography reveals the open structure of the text which admits numerous additions and interpolations. Ramayana is the representation of past in any chronological framework. It is a compilation that covers several centuries. The text of Ramayana deserves serious attention from the angle of social contexts. It is rather an index of change, extending over several centuries of the transformation of tribal groups into urban economy of mid-Gangetic valley, Eastern and Central regions of India.

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[117] *Ibid.*
[118] Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 211-231.
[119] Romila Thapar, *Exile and Kingdom*, Bangalore, 1972, 22.
[120] *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

The Mahabharata

The Mahabharata narrates the tension and feud between the *Kurus* and the Panchala. Like the Ramayana the Mahabharata reveals a heroic past, when society and existing values went through crisis or major upheaval.[121] Unlike the Ramayana the Mahabharata centre round the *Puru* lineage. The events leading to the patricidal war, and the destruction caused by the war are discussed in detail. The narratives after the war are brief. The Mahabharata ends with the journey of the Pandavas to heaven. The epic literature thus ends in tragedy.[122]

The Studies on the Mahabharata

The critical studies on the Mahabharata commenced by Lassen is followed by different groups such as the Indologists, Orientalists, historians and sociologists. The analytical and synthetic approaches dominated early studies on the Mahabharata.[123] The Indologists focus on the different layers of the text. Weber and Ludwig attempt to explain the Mahabharata as an extension of nature myths in the *Vedas*. Hopkins propound the inversion theory which suggests that in the original poem the Kauravas are the heroes. It is perverted by Brahminical appropriation of the tradition in the process of creation of the epic literature.[124] Though the inversion theory is refuted by many scholars the evolution of the epic poem has been studied in detail by many Indian scholars. The evolution of the

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[121] Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 218.
[122] R.C. Dutt, *Epics and lays of Ancient India, London*, 1989, p. 16.
[123] The prime question which characterise these two approaches is whether the Mahabharata is a single text or a product of heterogeneous traditions. The analytical school with scholars such as E. Von Schroder, Adolf Holtzmann, and Grierson illustrate the transformation of original war poem (Bharatha katha) composed by the bards of the kurus in to the epical corpus through the appropriation of the dominant cults (the krsna cult the fertility cult) of the nighbouring tribes. Joseph Dahlmann Sorinsen defend the synthetic approach by insisting on inherent unity of the text. For a detailed discussion of the arguments of these approaches see Puslker, *Studies in the Epics and Purans*, Bombay, 1955, p. xxx III.
[124] *Op. cit.*, p. xxx iv.

epic poem is analysed with a view to provide a chronological framework for the history of ancient India.[125] The most important theory about the growth of Mahabharata is propounded by Sukthanker and Dandekar who have elaborated upon the idea that the *Bhargavas* played a great role in the formative stages of the epic.[126] Pargiter asserts that the traditions are originally belonged to the kshatriyas. They are tampered by the brahminical compilers.[127] But the authenticity of this compartmentalisation into ksatriya/ brahminical tradition in the Indian context is also questioned by scholars like Pusalker and Dandekar.[128]

Roots of the Mahabharata as a Text

The Mahabharata began its existence as a simple narrative *(gatha)*.[129] Nucleus of the Mahabharata is designed as Jaya (Victory). This is evident from the reference to *jayonameti hatoyam*.[130] The words *'Mahabharatayudda,'*

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[125] The *Puranas* and the epics of India were used as the sources by Pargiter to create a list of the various dynasties with approximate chronological framework. Pargiter F.E., *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, New Delhi, 1962.

[126] It is regarded that the Mahabharata is the product of restructured traditions by the *brahmanas* who were the authors/compilers of the epic "Mahabharata in particular was in the hands of Brahmins belonging to the *Bhrgu* class who inflated it about its present bulk before the Gupta age" Tolboys Wheeler *India of Vedic Age with Reference to Mahabharata*, Delhi, 1953, pp.14-19. The role of the Bhrugus as the dominant lineage and the emergence of the brahmanas as the preservers of tradition which coincided with the transition from the preliterate to the literate society are elaborated upon by historians like D.D. Kosambi and Romila Thaper. This appropriation of traditions by the brahmanas is regarded as grounded on the needs and changes in the mode of production in the later vedic age. For the details of this approach see D.D. Kosambi *Myth and Reality*, Bombay, 1962 and also see R.S. Sharma, *Survey of Research in Economic and Social History of India*, New Delhi, 1986, pp. 41-108. How *varna* and *vamsa* determined social status in the lineage system, and how the itihasa tradition functioned as assumptions about the past are discussed in detail by Romila Thaper. For further details see Romila Thaper, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 42-69 and also see Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 115-124.

[127] Pargiter assumes that the kshatriya traditions which center around heroic deeds were in Prakrit language. They were restructured with didactic elements and *vaisnavite* traditions. The restructured traditions were rendered in Sanskrit. For details see Pargiter F.E., *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, New Delhi, 1962, pp. 21-24.

[128] But the existence of Prakrit as the language of tradition is doubted by Pusalker who states that there is no evidence. For details see Pusalker *Studies in the Epics and Puranas*, Bombay 1955. Also see Dandekar R.N., *Mahabharata Revisted*, New Delhi, 1990, p.107.

[129] *Op. Cit.* p. 127.

[130] Vidhvan Prakasam, (ed) *Mahabharatam* (Mal) Vol. 5, Kottayam, 1989, p.67 and p. 215.

and *'Mahabharatakhyanam'*[131] (the story of the Bharata battle) are found in the Mahabharata itself. Though there are differences of opinion about the date and details of the war between the Kurus and the Panchalas the war is undoubtedly recognized as nucleus of the Mahabharata. The *Gatha-s* and *narasamsi-s* are the direct precursors of this epic.[132] On the one hand they developed into long epic poems (heroic songs) on the other they developed into entire cycles of epic songs centring around a hero as in the Ramayana, or an incident such as the bloody battle in the Mahabharata.[133]

The text of Mahabharata begins with the conversation between *Sauti* who was a *suta* and the sages assembled in the *Naimsi* forest. *Sauti* recognises Vaisampayana as the earliest narrator of the story of Mahabharata and Vaisampayana is regarded as the Guru. When Sauti visited the twelve year long sacrificial session (serpent sacrifice) officiated by the sage *Saunaka* in the Naimisaranya he recited the story (*Bharatha Katha*) in the form of a poem. The story (*Bharatha Katha*) is also described as *itihasa, purana, akhyana upakhyana* and katha which reveals that it is derived from the ancient lore. Such descriptions reveal that:

a)   the core of Mahabharata namely the poem of the war of *Bharatha* is anterior to writing and it is a part of the popular oral tradition.

b)   there were specific occasions when such traditions were narrated. Such occasions of transmission helped to preserve the tradition.

c)   it reveals *sutas* as the group engaged in the transmission and preservation of oral traditions.

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[131] *Op. cit.* p.118.
[132] R.N. Dandekar, *Mahabharata Revisited*, New Delhi, 1990, p.128.
[133] *Op. cit.* p. 132.

Progressive iteration[134] is one of the features associated with the Mahabharata. In the Mahabharata more often the plots and subplots are carried forward through questions and answers. Often a legend is presented to a listener to explain a similar situation so that the listener immediately asks him to narrate the legend in detail. So the *Pauloma Parvam* and the *ĀsthikaParvam* abound in legends which narrate the adventures of many heroes and incidents of the different ages. They reveal themselves as the products of compilations and interpolations. Hence it can be assumed that they are derived from different sources. In oral poems the legends undergo constant restructuring, where the archaic elements of earlier traditions are retained as the base.[135] The *vaishnavite* traditions point out that these sections are later additions to the text. The *Pauloma Parvam* and the *Āsthika parvam* narrate the legends of the serpents (nagas). There are legends and cycles of legends such as the legend of *Kadru* the mother of serpents and Garuda.[136] There are also legends about the origin of great heroes, seers (ex. the legends of Agastya, Chavana) universe and Kingship. These are supposed to extend over a long period from the first millennium B.C. to the first millennium A.D.[137] The legend of Kadru reveal the collective consciousness about migrations and confrontations in the past. In the legend of Kadru the unprecedented increase in the number of serpents and tensions with in

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[134] Progressive iteration is regarded as one of the imnemonic aids which existed in the oral tradition. Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.232. Louisie Pound, *Th Poetic origins of the ballads*, London, 1921, p.87.

[135] One of the features associated with the transitions of ballads in to epic was the mixing up of the traits of an earlier age with the recent environment. This is regarded as the chief evidence for interpolation. For the discussion on the features of the transition of the ballads into epic. *Op. cit.* p.87 and also see Grumonere F.J. A Library of the Worlds best literature, Vol. III, London, 1927, p.130.

[136] Vidvan Prakasm, (ed.) *The Asthik Parvam Mahabharatam* (Mal), Kottayam, 1989, pp. 105-111.

[137] Such legends on origin are termed as origin myths. They are designed to narrate the origin of grand events. Thus they are different from folk tales which are concerned with minor social aspects. For the discussion on the features of origin myth in Indian tradition see Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 105-111.

the kingroups are indicated.[138] It is recognised that there was a large scale movement of population from the Indus river regions in to uttarapada (upper Gangetic plains) in the post urban Harappan period.[139] Most of the land was forest and Hastinapura is referred to as *Kuru-Jangala* (situated in a forest) in the Mahabharata.[140] The migrations of the *Purus*, the *Bharatas* and the wanderings of the lineages are mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. The process of conquest/ alliances/ assimilation of the earlier settlers continued for centuries. It resulted in the emergence of aggregational societies.[141] Due to the striking dissimilarities between the core which was regarded as original and the text of Mahabharata it is asserted that Mahabharata "contains several layers of encrustation extending over centuries."[142] In the preliterate societies where the mode of transmission was oral, myth was the popular format for passing information from generation to generation. The oral tradition appropriates the dominant aspects of the socio-political situations of the immediate past[143] while retaining the ghosts.[144] Thus they coincide with the transitions in society. But depicting the transitions in representation is not the motive. Hence they are presented in such a way that it

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[138] Vidvan Prakasam (ed.) *AshthaikaParvam, Mahabharatam* (Mal) Kottayam, 1989, pp. 105-111.

[139] B.Allchin, *Origins of a Civilisation*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 224.

[140] The Archaeological remains from the excavated sites such as Hastinapura and Atranjikhera reveal that there was extensive deforestation in the early stages. Burning was a major method. This is referred to through the story of Agni and Khandavan in the Mahabharata. For the details of the excavation revealing the possibilities of migrations into uttarapad from the first millennium BC to the first millennium A.D. See *Op. Cit.* p. 117.

[141] The term is borrowed from John Middleton and David Tait. Their studies on the features of the lineage society reveal that in this system different lineages are interlocked in relations based on common unlineal descent. Centralized political authority is absent. Such societies are termed as aggregational societies of segmentary lineage system. For the discussion of the structure or lineage system, and different types of societies see John Middleton and David Tait, *Tribes without Rulers*, London, 1958, p.4.
For the discussion of lineage system in the context of India from the first millennium BC to the first millennium AD. See Ramila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990.

[142] Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.148.

[143] *Ibid.*

[144] The archaic traits are termed as Ghosts by Umberto Eco. For further details see Umberto Eco, *Interpretation And Over Interpretation*, London, 1992, p.85.

facilitates the continuity of the narrative and projects the motive which is related to the powerstructure in the society of the immediate past.[145] In the sedentary communities cattle raid was one of the means of accumulating wealth.[146] In this activity leadership was essential. The Kuru panchala rajas and the *Panins* are regarded as engaged in cattle lifting. The stories of cattle raids associated with the Kauravas and the legends which exalt the heroic valour of the *yadhus* are mixed up with the social conditions in the monarchical states which belonged to the later period. Thus traditions of different social groups who belonged to different regions underwent the process of telescoping before they were appropriated in the creation of the Grand narrative. This is indicated in the myths of the origin of the kingship and the divinity of kings illustrate this. The notion of change is implicit in the origin myths of kingship which are presented in the form of speculation. The details of a primeval golden age in the uttarapada and the state of anarchy which followed are discussed in the *Santi Parvam*. Thus as different from other origin myths which narrate the absence of antecedents, the myths of kingship narrate a situation of anarchy as the background for the emergence of kingship.[147] The story of the wicked ruler *Vena*, and the suggestions in the *Āranyaka Parvam* and the *Ādi Parvam* to prevent the autocracy of ruler are derived from the collective memory of the occasions of crisis in the society in its transition to kingship. The *Anusasana Parvam* tells that people should take up arms and slay the king who fails to protect his subjects.

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[145] Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1990, p.83.
[146] *Ibid.*
[147] The Buddhist tradition stresses on the absence of family and varuna as the essential features of a primeval golden age in accordance with the ideology of the religion, while the *puranas* elaborate upon lawlessness as the context for the emergence of the kingship. In the *puranas* the stress is on emergence of the kingship. For the details on the representations of kingship in the itihasa-Purana tradition see Roy B.P., *Political Ideas and Institutions in the Mahabharata*, Calcutta, 1975, 1.154.

While the *Santi Parvam* exalts the authority of the ruler.[148] The epic has many

contexts where the kings are identified with *prajapathi, Deva* and Indra.[149] The

Mahabharata illustrates how the blindness of Dhrtrāstra and the ailment of pandu

created disputes over succession to the throne.[150] The later notions of *Devaputhra*

associated with the *Pandavas* reveal itself as the assumption of a much later age

"Though the idea of divinity existed in the early Indian tradition the notion of

Devaputhra developed only after the advent of the *Kusanas*."[151]

The Transition from *Bharatakatha* to Grand narrative

The *Sutas* were the custodians of heroic poetry.[152] They are regarded as

the specialised groups having knowledge of the traditions.[153] *Sutas* sang songs at

the court in praise of the chieftains. They even accompanied them in the battle to

witness the valour of the chiefs and euologised them in their songs.[154] The later

Bhatas and the *Caranas* belong to this category. In the Mahabharata *Sanjaya* is a

bard with respectable status. He narrates the details of the war at *Kurukshetra*

to the king. In the hierarchy of *varna* system the *Sutas* occupy an intermediary

position since they are regarded as the offspring of Brahmana father and

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[148] Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, p.118.
[149] The notion of divinity is regarded as functional by K.M. Panicker. Following this it is argued that the duties bestowed upon the king namely the protection of the people, environment, morality later equate kingship with God. For the further details see K.M. Panicker, *Origin and the Evolution of Kingship in India*, Baroda, 1938, p.35.
The notion of divinity attached to the office of the king is regarded as the representation of an age which is accustomed to absolute monarchy.
[150] Romila Thaper, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, p.118.
[151] *Ibid.*
[152] Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 115.
[153] R.N. Dandekar, *Mahābhārata Revisited*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 62. Pusalker, *Studies on the Epics and the Puranas*, Bombay, 1955, p. 32.
[154] Such heroic traditions are identified as the trajectories of heroic history. They are found in chiefdoms where the hero and the group are considered as identical. For the relevant discussion on the features of heroic history in the context of Greece see Marshal Sahalins *Islands of History*, New York, 1979, pp. 42-67.

kshatriya mother.[155] The Mahabharata is designated as ithihasa due to the myths and legends of heroes of the past. Originally *ithihasa* means 'thus it was'.[156] The term *itihasa* was employed to designate any tradition relating to certain heroic events of the past.[157] Thus *itihasa* is derived from the ancient lore where *katha* and legend are the forms of expression.[158] Many legends in the Mahabharata are also regarded as katha (Ex. the legend of *Agasthya*, and the legend of *Chavana*). The individual poems and the cycle of poems, local traditions and popular tales preserved by the *Sutas* are appropriated and found their way in the epic compilation. Thus the epic poem of Mahabharata is constituted out of the entire old bardic poetry.[159] "Even in its existence in oral tradition in the epic literature variation in words and contents occurred from generation to generation from place to place and from bard to bard."[160]

H. Jacobi identifies four stages in the creation of Mahabharata (a) the development of the story (b) the origin of the epical poem (c) the creation of the epical literature by the *Sutas* (d) the interpolation of the didactic elements. He assigns the early stages of the development of the epic poem to the Pre-Archaemedian period and the present form of the Mahabharata is assigned to the third or second century B.C.[161] The origin of the Mahabharata in the written form is explained through the narrative which illustrates how Vyasa the great

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[155] Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations,* New Delhi, 1990, p. 119.
[156] *Op. cit.* p. 115.
[157] M. Krishnamachariar, *A History of Classical Sanskrit Literature,* New Delhi, 1989, p. 65.
[158] R.N. Dandekar, *Mahabharata Revisited,* New Delhi, 1990, p. 93.
[159] *Op. cit.,* p. 94. M. Krishnamachariar, *A History of Classical Sanskrit Literature,* New Delhi, 1989, p. 65.
[160] *Op. cit.,* p. 88.
[161] Pusalker, *Studies in the Epics and the Puranas,* Bombay, 1955, p. xxviii.

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sage accomplishes writing of the Mahabharata through *Ganesa*. Mahabharata in its textual form assigns the authorship to Vyasa and speaks of several recensions and reductions. *Sumantu, Jaimoni, Paila, Suka* and *Vaisampayana* are regarded as the five rhapsodists who in their turn published the five versions.[162] Each recension was the outcome of a complex and composite growth. The differences in the recensions are regarded as originating from the appropriation of local traits of culture, faith and traditions.[163] The period of the growth of *Samhita* in to the epic remained a domain of speculations.

The transition of the epic literature from the preliterate to the literate tradition also coincides with changes in the socio-political organisation. There are wide spread migrations into the Gangetic plains and to the Vindhyan regions. It is recognised that there was a demographic rise in the new settlements.[164] This justifies the assimilation of the local population especially of those who owned wealth/power in the regions. The symbolic alliances between the pastroalists (the early Aryan language speaking migrants) and the primitive agriculturists

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[162] R.N. Dandekar R.N, *Mahabharata Revisited*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 107.
[163] *Op. cit.*, p. 110.
Attempts to find out the period of evolution of the epic centre round two factors a) the different layers of the text b) the different aspects of socio political organisation alluded to in the text. As for the layers of the text it is generally agreed that the text has three sections a) Jaya with 8800 stanzas c) third section with 24000 stanzas known as Bharata with out any upakyanas b) Adi Bharata with 10000 verses in which also included upakyanas. Winternit assigns (400 Bc-400 AD) as the period of evolution of epic, while Kunjunni Raja asserts that the core (Adi Bharata) to 200 AD. For further details see Pusalker, *Studies in the Epic and the Puranas*, Bombay, 1955, p. 110. On the basis of astronomical calculations the Mahabharata war is assigned tot the first millennium B.C. Due to the references to Siva, Bhrama and Vishnu the text of Mahabharata is regarded as post Bhudhist. F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, New Delhi, 1962, pp. 102-105. Correlating archaeological evidences (OCP and PGW cultures) and literacy evidences in the Vedic literature, a long period of evolution is assigned to the text of Mahabharata (from 1st millennium BC to the post Gupta period) Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 249-256. Romila Thapar, *Recent Perspectives of Indian History*, Bombay, 1995, pp. 18-34.
[164] B. Allchin, *Origins of a Civilisation*, New Delhi, 1997, p.214.

(the dominant among the local population) assume new dimensions.[165] The increase in the number of lineages brought a change with in the vise of the Rigvedic period. Those who managed to appropriate farmlands in the new regions are elevated tot he status of grahapati who late constitute the category of the Vaisyas. The wet cultivation prevalent in the eastern regions which demand intensive labour necessitate labour beyond the kingroups.[166] Those who are precluded from the acquisition of farms are driven to the position of labourers who constitute the category of Sudras.[167] The leadership in cattle raids give way to leadership in the settlement of new lands. Thus the leader *Gopa, Gopati, janasya Gopati* (who is later termed as rajan meaning to glow/shine) becomes nripati and naresvara (the lord of the men)[168] *Kula* (clan) is the unit of the family and a group of clans constitute the jana. The *Rajanya* (senior lineages) from among whom the Raja is chosen is displaced by khsatriya the term being derived from *ksatra* (land). This is expressed by the naming of the territories after the Khsatriya lineage such as Kekeya, Madra and Matsya etc. The Mahabharata narrates the names of tribes who took part in the war at Kurukshetra and the tribes derive their names from the lineages to which they belong.

Among the dominant senior lineages the members are bound together and differentiated from others on the basis of ritual with the increase in population the number of lineages also increased resulting in the formation of the *gotra* system due to the insistence on the exogamous basis of the *gotra* system.[169] The stories of matrimonial alliances of the Pandavas testify the significance of

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[165] Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 89.
[166] *Op. cit.* p. 114.
[167] *Op. cit.* p. 118.
[168] *Op. cit*, 121.
[169] *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

lineage (*Vaṃśa*) which existed among the Khsatriyas. The status attached to the Khsatriyas marks the beginning of the emergence of them as the power elite. Mahabharata like Ramayana abounds in stories of alliances between the Brahmanas and the Khsatriyas. The appropriation of ethnic groups in the wake of new settlements are legitimised in traditions. There are stories which reveal that both *Asuras* and Aryans are the children of Kasyapa by different wives.[170] There are also narratives which relate the *Nagas* to Vasudeva Krishna. The increasing relationship of interdependence between the Brahmanas (Priests) and the chieftains (Khsatriyas) is well reflected in the shifts which occur in the preservation, occasions of transmission of the traditions.[171] Myths that narrate heroic actions now assume the form of a tale with necessary modifications. It was recited on occasions of religious ceremonies (*yajnas*) in the ruling families. The focus is on didatic elements. They attempt to moralize through narratives. They are not designed to explain why and how events happened in the past. But they explain the 'grand events.' This paradigm is further elaborated upon by the *puranas*. There is a class of ministrels known as the '*yayatickas*' and '*yavakritikas*.' They recite the tales (legends) which besides exalting the khsatriya ruler, elaborate upon his *Vaṃśa* to legitimise his special privileges and social status.[172] This is to the accompaniment of lute and other musical instruments and last for nearly twelve days.[173] The emergence of new group as seers and preservers of tradition result in the decline of the social status of Sutas.

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[170] Vidvan Prakasam, (ed) *Mahabharatham* (Mal), Kottayam Vol. I, pp. 187-199.

[171] The creation of the universe, of Devas, of Asuras re regarded as the aspects discussed by the later mythologies. They project the superhuman powers of Brahmins and their ability to bestow favour/curses on the land and ruler. For further details of the emergence of this power elite see Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 149.

[172] The chiefship usually tied to a particular lineage of the locality. Regulation of succession is illustrated by myths which speak of a permanent descent line," John Middleton and David Tait, *Tribes Without Rulers*, London, 1958, p.19.

[173] R.N. Dandekkar, *Mahabharata Revisited*, New Delhi, 1990, p.87.

The bipolar representation of Sanjaya and Karna in the text of Mahabharata reflects the honour/dishonour, which is associated with *Sutas* in the early/later ages. "The emergence of specialised roles and the changes in the socio, economic status mark the beginning of the birth of civilisation and the beginning of historic period."[174] Once the notion of documentation occurs in a society the oral tradition gradually loses its validity. Mythology the chief component of the historical tradition, assume new dimension. Among the heterogeneous parallel traditions a few become the favoured ones. They tend to freeze and they are linked to another component of historical tradition namely genealogy.

Genealogies as "routinized charisma"[175]

Genealogical sections in the Mahabharata are in the form of (a) descent lists of *Taksha* and in the *Puru* lineage (b) narratives which focus on origin (origin myths)[176] (c) the dominant *Vamsas* - the *Candra Vamśa* and the *Surya Vamśa* around which different ruling groups are clustered.

Lineages in the genealogies are identified as the dominant racial and linguistic groups - the Aryans, the Dravidians, the Mundas etc.[177] They are rarely records of times of past though they have its own sense of time which is expressed in the measuring of generations.[178] The genealogies though primarily concerned with the list of succession also contain reminiscences of migrations, especially about

[174] Fried Morton, *Readings in Anthropology*, New York, 1934, p.172.
[175] The term is borrowed from Sahalin. In his work "The Islands of History" he analyses how different cultural orders produce historic consciousness and different historical practices Marshal Sahalin. *The Islands of History*, New York, 1974.
[176] The interaction between cultural order and traditions in the context of Indian culture is a major theme to be found in the writings of Romila Thapar. It is illustrated through analysing the origin myths in ancient Indian tradition. For details see, Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.218.
[177] F.E. Pragiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, New Delhi, 1962, pp. 45-59.
[178] Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.327.

the distribution of lineages.[179] Genealogical records are designed to fulfil certain needs and they are traced to the emergence of private property that is associated with agricultural economy.[180] The genealogical links narrow down and legitimise the access to property. Among the social groups which have ritual status, with the increase in the number of rituals, specialisation in rituals arise. Particular rituals are associated with particular groups. Meticulous care is taken by each group to record the names of seers, *purohitas* of them as they are to be memorised on rituals. There are also records of *gotras* since knowledge of the *gotra* is an essential part of social and ritual identity.[181]

The format of the epic is so designed around two *Vaṃsas* the *Surya Vaṃsa* or the *Iksvaku* lineage, and the *Chandra Vaṃsa* or the *Aila* lineage so that different dynasties are clustered around them. Both of them owe there descent from *Manu*. The lists preserved in them reveal that the former is associated with the monarchical system of the kingdoms of Vidhea and Kosala. The Mahabharata focuses on the *Aila* lineage or the *Chandra Vaṃsa*. This lineage while revealing traces of matrilineal descent speaks of the distribution of tribes in the central, western and northern India. The settlements of the sons of Pururavas are described. Later the descent list is displaced by the names of the segments. Once again the lineages of Puru is described which covers an extensive area. Many of the names are not that of Kings but of tribes.[182] The *Yadava-vaṃsa* which plays a key role in Mahabharatha war has a wider geographical reach including the

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[179] *Op. cit.* p. 330.
[180] Romila Thaper, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, p.118.
[181] *Op. cit.* p. 143.
"These myths think of the future as behind them and find in a marvellous past the measure of the demands that are made to their current existence." Marshall Sahalins *Islands of History*, New York, 1979, p. 49.
[182] Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.249.

central regions and western India. The strength of *vaṃsa* is depicted by describing the number of segment lineages who took part in the war at Kurukshetra. The details of the *Yadava Vaṃsa* in the Mahabharata illustrate how different groups are interlocked in the segmentary lineage system. The wider expansion of segments also include the assimilation of tribes, local cults, and deities. This is revealed by the stories of origin. "This distribution of segments suggest a period before the emergence of stable kingdoms or the political forms are more in the nature of Chiefdoms."[183] In the Mahabharata genealogies of greater depth are rare, indicating that they have undergone the process of selection where only the important names are memorised. The details of *Candra Vamsa* refer to *Pancha-Jana*, which denote the dominant five tribes of Yadu, Turvasa, Druhya, Anu and *Puru*.

Thus genealogies are compilations and hence derived from the family history of different lineages. The genealogies with myths of origin are turned in to a part of the cultural/religious order by specialised groups such as the priests and genealogists attached to the ruling houses. They are recited on occasions of ritual. Thus they undergo experiential rebirth. They thus became the chief constitutive elements of great tradition.

Early *Puranic* traditions

The term purana signifies 'ancient tale' or 'ancient lore' or 'old narrative.' Later the term purana is employed to designate a separate *genre* of sacred literature. *Vayu Purana*[184] defines purana as "that which lives from ancient

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[183] Romila Thaper, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, p.185.
[184] V. Balakrishnan and R. Leeladevi, (trans) *Vayu Purana*, Trichur, 1983, Vol. 203.

times" while *Matsya Purana*[185] explains the term as denoting "records of past events." Purana is regarded as a related category of *itihasas* in the Vedic literature. The *Vayu Purana* and the *Brahmanda Purana* designate themselves as *Purana itihasa*. The *itihasa- purana* tradition is recognised as one of the main constituents of the ancient Indian Historical tradition.[186] The puranas retain strands of continuity with earlier forms of historical tradition such as the *gatha-s*, *narasamsi-s*, the *itihasas* and with the *Vakovakyas* in *Vedic* literature, as the themes of the puranas are derived from the ancient lore. The contents of the puranas are regarded as secular in nature[187] and the puranas are assigned to the interface between oral and literature traditions in ancient India.[188]

Origin and Development

Progressive iteration is one of the significant features in the recital of the puranas. The leading dialogues and sub-dialogues are linked to the Sage Parasara or to Ramaharshapa the disciple of Vyasa. Ramaharshapa is recognised as *Suta*. The puranic texts especially the *Visnu Purana* reveals several aspects associated

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[185] Sreedhara Varrier, (trans.) *Matsya Purana*, Trichur, 1992, Vol.53 and Vol. 63.

[186] Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.118.

[187] F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, New Delhi, 1962, p.126.
But some scholars do not recognise *Puranas* as a related category of the Itihasas. They regard itihasas as the narratives of the heroic deeds of great men while *puranas* are regarded as dealing with the actions of gods. For further details see Krishnamachariari, M., *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature*, New Delhi, 1989, p.57.The absence of rituals and mantras are pointed out by Pargiter as supportive of his conclusion. He assumes that the *Puranas* originally must have been Kshatria tradition in Prakrit. Later they are sanskritised through the interpolation of Brahmana traditions by the Brahmanic compilers. But many European scholars are of the opinion that the *puranas* are important from the religious point of view and consider them as sacred literature. "The earliest reference to the *Puranas* is from a religious point of view regarding the Khsatriya origin of the *Puranas* had been correct." Prof. Keith, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London, 1914, p.1027 and also see Wintermitz *History of Indian Literature*, Calcutta, 1952, pp. 523-524.

[188] Romila Thaper, *Genealogies and the Oral Tradition in the Methodology of the use of oral sources in History*, Report of the first India-Zimbawe Conference, Harare, 1989, p.21.

with the origin of puranas in textual form. Sumati, Agnivarcas, Maitreya Samsapayana, Arturata and Sarvani are mentioned as the disciples of the *Suta* Ramharashapa. The last three are regarded as the compilers of the root samhitas, "Like Mahabharata the puranic tradition has all along been floating and dynamic and the texts has been subjected to numerous revisions, additions, omissions, and modifications. The roots of *puranas* has always been designated as ancient lore."[189] On the basis of the identity of language in the dynastic lists and on the basis of references to *purana* in the singular term, it is asserted that there was only one purana till the compilations of the *Atharvaveda*.[190] The *Bhagavathapurana* mentions the names of six *puranikas* as a specialised group having knowledge of the *puranas*.[191] There are numerous occasions associated with the rites of consecration when the *puranas* are recited. The *puranas* are meant for recital, as they are composed chiefly in the *Sloka* metre. The popular belief associated with the *puranas* is that they enable men to attain *Rudraloka* (the heaven designated for the commons). This reveals that *puranas* were recited before the public.[192] This indicates the possibility of the transition of the *puranas* from the floating traditions to a specialised class of literature. The *puranic* tradition at this time preponders over the *itihasas*. The *puranas* and the *itihasas* are treated as distinctively different which is visible with the development[193] of

[189] Pusalker, *Studies in the Epics and Puranas*, Bombay, 1955, p.58.
[190] *Op. cit.* p. 79.
[191] R.N. Dandekar, *Mahabharata Revisited*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 184.
[192] *Op. cit.* p. 79.
[193] The origin, stages of evolution of saivism and vaisnavism as the dominant religious sects is the prime concern of the purānas. Thus the pantheistic texture of the purānas encouraged studies of the purānas. These studies reveal the significance of the epigraphic material for the phenomenology of religions. To cite a few examples R.G. Bhandarkar *Vaisnavism, Saivism and other Minor Sects*, Bombay, 1913. H.C. Ray Chaudari, *Material for the Study of the Early History of Vaisnavism*, Calcutta, 1920.

pantheistic and Vedantic[194] texture of the *puranas*. There are assigned to the advanced stages of religion.[195] The *Bhavisyatpurana* which belongs to the age of *Sutra* literature illustrates the shift in the notion associated with the *puranas*. By this time the *puranas* constitute a special category termed as "the Sacred literature."

There are eighteen *Mahapuranas* and eighteen *Upa-puranas* according to the traditional view (For the names of the Maha-*puranas* and Upa-*puranas* see Table 2.2). But the later studies on *puranas* differ from each other as to the exact number of the *puranas*.[196] The *puranas* are later classified on the basis of (a) *rasa* (*Sathvika, Tamas* and *Rajas*) (b) characteristics (*Laksana*) (c) contents (divinity to which the *purana* is dedicated). The five characteristics of the *puranas* as defined by *Amarasimha* are (a) *Sarga* (creation) (b) *Pratisarga* (dissolution and recreation) (c) *Vamsa* (geneologies) (d) *manvantara* (ages of Manus) and *Vamsyanucarita* (genealogies of kings). But most of the *puranas* do not strictly adhere to this model. Hence the concept of *Pancalaksana* remains theoretical. Some of the *puranas* discuss matters like dana (gifts) *Vratas* (religious observances) *Tirthas* (Sacred places) *Sraddha* (rites in honour of the dead). The later concept of *Dasalaksana* facilitates the inclusion of several aspects such as medicine, grammar, drama, music etc. in the *puranas*. Thus knowledge

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[194] In the upanisadic period the chapters on cosmogeny which appropriate sanikhya and Upanisadic ideas are added in the puranas along with descriptions on the ages of the Manus" Pusalker, *Studies in the Epics and Puranas,* Bombay, 1951, p. IV.

[195] Vannucci, *Ecological Readings in the Vedas,* New Delhi, 1990, pp. 110-115.

[196] Pusalker considers that there are only seventeen Maha Puranas because he does not include Siva Purana in the list of Maha Puranas. Pargiter includes the Siva Purana and the Vayu Purana in his list of the Maha Puranas which are considered as nineteen in number. For the relevant discussion on the number of the purānas see Pusalker, *Studies in the Epics and Puranas,* Bombay, 195, pp. 51-58.

elaborated upon the intellectual tradition of the *Vedic* literature is appropriated in

the *puranas* of later ages. Thus the *puranas* claim to present an overview of the

past but representation of past or, manifesting knowledge is not the prime motive

of the *puranas*.[197] The function of the *puranas* becomes evident only through the

analysis of its chief components, which is to be discussed later.

Studies on the *puranas* - an Overview

Before the 19th century the *puranas* were regarded as literary compilations

full of legends and myths. In the early decades of the 19th century Wilson

attempted a systematic study of the *Puranas*. He introduced the English

translation of *Visnu Purana* with critical notes. This initiated the study of

puranas as a specialised category, which needs serious attention. The early

scholars identified the characteristic features of *puranas* through the theoretical

model of Panchalaksana.[198] Meyer attempted to establish the relation between

puranic tradition and Smrjti literature.[199] The articles of R.C. Hazara on the

puranas focus on the ritualistic nature of them. He attempts to introduce a

chronological account of Hindu rites and Customs.[200] The studies on *puranas* by

F.E. Pargiter, Pusalker and Dikshiter focus on the significance of the *puranas* as

a part of Ancient Indian Tradition. The critical studies on *puranas* were

undertaken by Smith, Jayaswal Bhandarker and Altekar as sources for the

construction of political history of ancient India. The possibilities for the study of

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[197] Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.218.
[198] Kirfel, *Dasa Purana Pancalakshana*, Bonn, 1927.
[199] Meryer, *Geset Zbuch and Purana*, Berlin, 1929.
[200] R.C. Hazara, *Studies in the Puranic records on Hindu rites and Customs*, Dacca, 1940.

cultural history from the *puranas* has now received serious attention.[201] The

study of *puranas* in terms of social functions provides yet another dimension.

Myth, genealogy, and historical narrative are regarded as the constituents

of the *puranic* tradition.[202] The myths and genealogies are largely drawn upon

from the ancient lore. They are further elaborated in the historical literature of the

Post-Gupta Period.[203] Thus myths in the genealogical section of the *puranas* are

assigned to the Post-Gupta period as the *puranas* are documented in this age.[204]

The myths and genealogies being derived from the ancient lore, narrate the

distribution of lineages, the mobility of the social groups, the origin of the

universe, the legends of flood, and the origins of the dominant lineages.

The *Puranic* myths as a Traditional form of Representation

The remote past is discussed in the form of myths. The *puranic* myths are

available in the *Vamśanucarita*, which is regarded as the core of the *puranic*

tradition. The *puranas* contain stereotype myths and narratives which are traced

to a long period from the first millennium B.C. to the first millennium A.D.[205] As

part of the oral tradition they have open structure. This enables the appropriation

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[201] It is pointed out that there was reluctance on the part of scholars to incorporate *puranas* in the study of religions in India. The *puranas* did not enjoy the sanctity or the vedas or the significance of the smritis. The orientalists and indologists focussed on the overarching Sanskrit traditions. The significance of *puranas* in the making of regional tradition in Bengal is studied by Dr. Kunal Chakrabarti. For further details see Dr. Kunal Chakrabarti, *Religious Process The Puranas and the making of a Regional Tradition,* New Delhi, 2001. To cite a few examples which attempted to study the cultural history from the *puranas,* see Devendra Kumar Raja Ram Patil, *Cultural History from the Vayu Purana,* Delhi, 1973 and Rajkumar Arora, *Historical and Cultural data from the Bhavishya Purana,* Jullunder, 1972, S.G. Kantawala, *Matsya Purana,* Baroda, 1964.

[202] Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations,* New Delhi, 1990, p.231.

[203] *Op. cit.* p. 201.

[204] *Op. cit.* p. 218.

[205] Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations,* New Delhi, 1990, p. 98.

of the changing social assumptions. Myths become meaningful only if viewed as the lived experiences. Subjective experiences is the operative base of myths.[206]

Two features associated with the *puranic* myths are

a) The myths are charters of faith for the people because they believe that the past as narrated by the myth are true.[207]

b) The blurring of the contours of past and present which is visible in the *puranas* have their own logic. This is best illustrated in the perception of time, changes, and space.[208]

They myths of origin constitute a considerable section of the *puranas*. The myths of origin narrate the creation of the universe (a) the legends of flood, (b) the origin of Manu and the history of seven Manus (c) origin of the two royal lineages-the *Surya Vaṃśa* and the *Candra Vaṃśa*.

The *puranic* versions of the legends of flood are different from each other. The legend of flood referred to in the Mahabharata is elaborated upon in the *puranas*. The legend of flood is further elaborated in *the Satapata Brahmana*. The differences are due to the motive of the tradition concerned. *Visnu Purana* which is regarded as the model[209] presents three accounts of the creation of the world. These accounts framed in *upanisadic* ideas depict *Brahma* as the creator. Hierarchical stratification is a significant feature of these accounts.

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[206] Ariel Glucklich, *The Sense of Adharma*, Delhi, 1992, p.38. For the discussions on the subjective experiences of myth in the context of Kerala. See Dr. Rajan Gurukkal and Dr. M.R. Raghava Varier, *Mithum Samohavum* (Mal) Feroke, 1994.

[207] *Op. cit.*

[208] Anand K. Coomaraswamy, *Time and Eternity*, Bangalore, 1990, pp. 180-188.

[209] *Visnu Purana* satisfies the requirements of Pancalakshana and hence regarded as the model. More over, the *Visnu Purana* is regarded as complete in form while the *Vayu* and *Brahmanda Puranas* are regarded as incomplete as a few sections of them are lost. For the relevant discussion see Pusalker, *Studies in the Epics and the Puranas*, Bombay, pp. 63-65.

These accounts of creation insist on 'the mechanical solidarity.'[210] The flood

legends are to be found in *the Sarga* and *the Pratisarga* sections of the *puranas*.

The *Pratisarga* of the *puranas* also narrate the origin of Manu as the

saviour of the human beings as the progenitor of the human race. In one version

Vaivasvata Manu has ten sons among whom he divides the whole country. But

all the *puranas* depict *Ila* one of the descendants of Manu as hermaphrodite from

whom descended the two royal lineage-the *Surya Vamsa* and the *Candra Vamsa*.

Like the Buddhist tradition, the *puranic* tradition too insists on twin siblings as

the procreator of the *Jana*. This is designed to assert the purity of the lineage.[211]

The story of Manu indicates the pictured the significance of authority as above

and beyond the rest of the human community. Unlike the arch (sovereign power)

in the polis of Greece Manu derives his authority from divinity. Cosmological

time is discussed in the *puranas* which compute time in vast cycles.[212]

Cosmological time serves as the background for the actions of the divine kings

who maintain relations with the cosmos and with the subjects in this world.

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[210] The term is derived from Durkheim who asserts that religion is the projection of social experiences. Durkheim influence the writings of Maxweber and Talcott parson who further elaborate upon the social conditioning of religions. The phenomenologists criticise this and point out the irreducibility of religions to social functions. The anthropologists too believe that the sociological explanations of religion are not valid for primitive groups who do not have clans or totems. For the discussion on the sociological explanations of the *puranas* see Gunal Chakravarthy "Recent approaches to the study of religion" in Romila Thaper (ed) *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, Bombay, 1995.

[211] Romila Thaper, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi, 1990, p.64.

[212] The perception of time in the *puranas* is a major theme to be found in the studies on *puranas*. The computation of time in vast cycles is taken literally and attempts are made to provide a chronological framework by F.E. Pargiter and Pusalker. The conception of time in vast cycles is regarded as grounded in seasonal changes which are employed as conventional time markers in the traditional forms of representation. Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 247.
The cyclic conception of time brings forth the opinion of the western scholars that for Indian thought time is unreal. This is challenged by Anand K. Coomaraswamy in his work on Time and Eternity. He admits that the introspection of time is complex and vexing in different traditions. The cyclic conception of time is only a geometrical metaphor. It is not related to the change of events but to changes n social patterns. The consciousness of temporality is an essential ingredient in it. For further details on the different dimensions of the concept of time in India see Anand K. Coomaraswamy, *Time and Eternity*, Bangalore, 1990, pp. 180-198.

This is best illustrated by the myth of Pururavas and Urvasi.[213] The *Candra Vamsa* illustrate Pururavas as the great ancestor. The story of Yayati which appears in many of the *puranas* points out the supremacy of the Puru lineage. This stereotype myth exalts Puru as the son who exchanges his youth with the oldage of his father. The son, Puru is conferred upon with sovereignty. Different groups such as the *Yadavas, Yavanas Bhojas* and a variety of *mlecchas* are referred to as the descendants of the other sons of Yayati-yadu, Turvasa Druhyu and Anu. Thus the *puranic* tradition speaks of the distribution of lineages and legitimise the rights to land and thus create a space for them. The consciousness of the identity of various social groups are reinforced through tradition. The stories on the Brahamana-Khsatriya relations indicate the significance of groups who have political power. The myths in *puranas* reveal two dominant traits which are constitutive of the consciousness of past in the traditional society. In the *puranic* tradition these myths on the one hand become the trajectories of the grand tradition. This is the domain of specialised knowledge which narrate the legitimacy of succession. This was preserved in the royal households, and by the dominant groups who were the elite. The occasions of rituals and ceremonies reaffirm them, through experiential rebirth. For the commons, the *puranic* myths are the lived experiences, constitutive of ones own social identity. It also narrates the co-existence of heterogeneous groups.

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[213] This is regarded as a stereotype myth which has been rendered in the form of narrative in a variety of texts. Romila Thapar views this as legitimising the high status of the Suryavamsa from an apsara. Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations,* New Delhi, 1990, p. 305.
D.D. Kosambi interprets this is indicating the transition to patriarchal society. The stress on genealogy and the story of the sacrifice of Puruvas and his transformation in the Ghandharva are regarded as illustrative of this. For further details see D.D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality,* Bombay, 1962, pp. 16-32.

Genealogy

Genealogies in the *puranas* are assigned to the interface between the oral and the literate traditions. In the earlier *puranas* such as the *Matsya* and the *Vayu*, genealogies form a separate section. Genealogies were (a) ignored as full of myths and legends or (b) attempts are made to identify different races from them and thereby recast the early history of India or (c) taken literally in the attempt to form a chronological framework for the history of early India. Thus there were different approaches to the study of *puranas*. The *puranas* are recently regarded as "attempts at reconstruction of the past through registering the changes in the society."[214]

The origins of genealogy are traced to the vedic literature which refers to the descent list of dominant lineages, seers, *rajrsis* and kings. They also speak of the links among these groups. The family pedigree of the Bharatas, the purus, the family pedigrees of *rsis*, Brahman *gotras* are visible in the vedic literature. With the proliferation of lineages and Brahman *gotras*, the demarcation of social groups through rituals existed. Hence the lists of the *purohitas* became a part of the sacrificial rituals of each social group. Moreover, the occasions of warfare and new settlements necessitated descent lists which specifically assert the rights of succession, legal rights and social status. Genealogies are regarded as "metaphysical extensions."[215] The documentation of lineage in the *puranas* is regarded as marking the transfer of the representation of past from such

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[214] Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.218.
[215] The term is borrowed from Michel Foucault. The trajectories which constitute Genealogy are analysed by him. For further details see Paul Rabinov, *The Foucault Reader*, London, 1984, pp. 125-147.

specialised groups as the bards, the *Suta*, the *Magadha* to the literate group.
The Ganga-Yamuna, doab its fringes and the middle Gangetic plain are the
regions discussed in the *puranas*.

Narratives in the *Puranic* Tradition

The narrowing down of parallel traditions in favour of royal traditions is
visible in the narratives of the *puranas*. Though they elaborate upon the
mythologies they are created in a network which suggests an overview of the
past. The narratives in the *puranas* focus on the social situations which are
considered as significant. They are associated with the projection
of Kingship.[216] The narratives abound in many accounts of battles. Here the king
stands in a certain relationship with the neighbouring units (rulers of other
kingdoms) and with his kin groups. "The kingship provides a general time
indication for the diverse incidents of lineage tradition or personal recollection
which taken by themselves would be in a strict sense socially meaningless and
temporally more duration."[217] The creation of the 'Divine King' and the origin of
the four *varna*s from his divine body rather reveal the ethos of the changing
socio-economic structures in the formation of state. In the *puranas*, the king is
divine, and he is able to mediate with the cosmos. Manu is historicized as one
who introduced hierarchical stratification and restored order. This heroic
tradition has speaks of a great king who has enormous powers to introduce

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[216] The idea is borrowed from the observations on archaic kingship. The anthropology of archaic
kingship initiated by Frazer has been elaborated upon by many scholars such as Heusch, Geertz,
Adler and also by earlier classical scholars such as Evans Pritchard and Dumezil through the
categories of Divine kings, sacred kings and Magical kings etc.
[217] Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History*, New York, 1985, p.36.

rapid changes. "The main relationships of society are ˌat once projected historically and embodied currently in persons of authority. The situations of cosmic disorder has been identified as the chaos following the death of a divine king."[218]

The narratives in the *puranas* contained elements from early traditions and also new elements which reveal the appropriation of the socio economic aspects of the immediate past change. Horror of the changes and the details of changes are well reflected in the descriptions of the *Kali* Age which are present in all the *puranas* in different versions. They are mostly in the form of sweeping statements in the tone of prophecy. They also reveal fairly good knowledge of geography and knowledge of various social groups in different parts of India. They speak of the break up of large family communities, the fragmentation of property, the alarming increase in the population of Sudra labourers, and *mlecchas* and the rise of petty chiefs which led to the emergence of the tendencies setting off towards the post Gupta period.[219] The *Visnu* and the *Brahmanda* refer to the decadence of towns. The *Visnupurana* further states that the weak and poor man will have to serve the strong and the rich man as his master which indirectly alludes to the growth of landed estates.[220]

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[218]   *Op. cit.* p.43.
        Another dimension o the cosmic disorders illustrate that they are employed as time markers. This is common in various west Asian versions to which the Indian versions seem approximate. Romila Thapar Genealogies and the oral tradition in the Methodology of the use of oral sources in History. *Report of the First India Zimbawae Conference*, Harare, 1989, p.21. Many scholars assert tat cosmic disorders signifies the consciousness of change and the expression of horror over change. For further details see B.N.S. Yadava "The Accounts of the Kali Age And The Social Transition From Antiquity to the Middle Ages" in *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol.V, No. 1-2-1978-79, p.32 and also see Anand K. Coomaraswamy. *Time and Eternity*, Bangalore, 1990, pp.110-119.

[219]   B.N.S. Yadhava, "The Accounts of The Kali Age and The Social Transition From Antiquity To The Middle Ages," in *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. II, No. 1-2-1978-79, pp. 43-49.

[220]   *Op. cit.* p.54.

The narratives are used as sources from which the social situations of India in the ancient period are analysed. They envisaged the theoretical model of *varna* as the basis of social order which emerged from advanced economic system.[221]

Representation of Space and Time in the *Puranas*

Though Indo Gangetic Doab is the Central place in the *puranic* tradition, the *puranas* also narrate long lists of mountains, rivers and places. At times they are referred to in associations with places of pilgrimage and as part of the 'accretions.'[222] The distinction between real space and cosmological space is a phenomenon unthought of. There are different categories of spaces such as profane space, experiential space, real space in the *puranic* tradition. The stories which narrate the relationship between the Brahmanas and Khsatriyas are regarded as archaic survivals. They narrate events that are supposed to have taken place in Cosmos. Here the space is representational.[223] The Corpus of the *puranas* became poetic literature and the historical material embedded in the

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[221] The Greek society and the Roman society in the days of empire is the normative framework for such studies. Hence they insist on a society of hierarchical stratification with slavery of the Greek model Relations between the church and the state in medieval Europe too influence their ideas of Brahmana-*kshatriya* relations in ancient India. For the details of this approach see Rajkumar Arora, *Historical and Cultural data from the Bhavishya Purana*, Jullunder, 1972, pp. 172-190.

[222] The term is borrowed from Devendrakumar Raja Ram Patil. He says that the sections dealing with the origin and development of Saivism and Vaisnavism constitute the bulk of the Purānas. It is here that the influence of the Brahmin redactor is felt For further details see *Cultural History From The Vayu Purana*, Delhi, 1973, pp. 124-132.

[223] The term is borrowed from Henri Lucienfebvre. In this analytical study on the production of space he illustrates the generative process of space which he calls as discourse of space. He asserts that the representational space which portray space in symbols, images occur in sacred literature, and they are associated with heroic communities. Notions of space are regarded as related to the cultural peculiarities of different social groups. Here the notion of political power is implicit in representational space and hence shifts occur in the representational space. For further details see, Henri Lucienfebvre, *The Production of Space*, London, 1974, pp. 36-59.

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puranas was in the form of legends. Time is represented in the *puranic* tradition either with reference to (a) cyclical occurrences (Yuga) (b) kinship relations (c) regnal years (d) generations. The last two are not accurate and the events dispersed in them point out the changed social situations and the tensions of the transition. The traditional genealogical records contain two varieties of tradition-the narratives and the fixed tradition.[224] The narratives has legends and myths which also serve the purpose of mnemonic aids. They usually occur in the form of dialogues. The fixed tradition appropriated numerous strands of oral tradition but they undergo the process of telescoping where only the important names, events are appropriated. A greater degree of tampering occurs in the narratives and it has numerous interpolations.

The narratives in some of the *puranas* such as the *Linga purana* and the *Brahmanda purana* speak of various aspects of the socio economic structure of an age as late as the 16th century. Along with the *puranas* new forms of appropriation came in to existence.

The non-*Purānic* traditions

The historical tradition of the *itihasas* and the *puranas* was displaced by new trends. These trends were expressed through the new literary forms of *kavya-s* and *carita-s*. The term *kavya* was used to designate the work of a poet. In its narrower sense the terms *kavya* and *carita* are used as equivalents to poem, prose or verse.[225] *Kavya-s* are regarded as of two categories - *Mahakavya-s* and

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224 Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.3120.
225 M. Krishnamachariar, *A History of Classical Sanskrit Literature*, Delhi, 1989, p.68.

Laghukavya-s. The structure of *kavya-s* had three elements - metrical verses, prose and mixed.[226] Some of the earliest *kavya-s* written by Kalidasa, Ashvaghosha, Kumaradas and Katyayana set the model for the subsequent *Kavya-s.* The literary convention of these *kavya-s* are adapted by the later works which belonged to this tradition *'Kumarasambhava'* of Kalidasa. *'Kiratharjuneeya'* of Bharavi, *'Sisupala vadha'* by Maha, *'Naushatheeya caritha'* of Sree Harsha were regarded as the *Pauchamahakavyas* in Sanskrit.[227] These *kavya-s* dealt with specific themes drawn from the *itihasa-s* and the *puranas.* Ashwaghosha, Nagarjuna, Vasubindu, Dignaga, Vasumitra, Dharma Pala, Dharma Kirti, and Santha Rakshitan were regarded in Buddhist literature as the authors of *kavya-s.* The Buddhist too used Sanskrit *kavya-s* to popularise their religious ideas.[228]

The *kavya-s* are classified in to several categories on the basis of theme (a) *Kavya-s* which dealt with dance, drama, music and other fine arts (*Sastra Kavya-s*) (b) *Kavya-s* which focus on linguistics (c) *Kavya-s* which are philosophical (d) *Kavya-s* which are designed to express rasas to entertain the listeners (e) *Kavya-s* which deal with historical themes. It is this last category which is relevant in this context.

The Meherauli Pillar Inscriptions with poetically coloured genealogy, the *Prasasati* in the Sun temple in Mandasor composed by *Vakbhatta* in Malava and *Harisena*'s panegyric account of Samudra Gupta reveal familiarity with *Kavya*

[226] *Op. cit.* p.69.
[227] Dr. Kunjunni Raja and Dr. M.S. Menon, *Sanskrita Sahitya Charithra* (Mal) Vol II, Trichur, 1991, p.127.
[228] *Op. cit.* p.129.

style even in the Gupta Period.[229] Like the *kavya-s* a few of the *carita-s* such as

Pandavacarita, Devicarita, Ramacarita, derived themes from the *itihasa-s* and

the *puranas. Buddhacarita* of Ashwaghosha elaborated upon the stories of life of

Buddha as narrated in the *Tripitaka*. But most of the *carita-s* like the *kavya-s*

dealt with the descriptions of the glory of kings and Petty chiefs. Hence the

kavya-s and *carita-s* are regarded as more secular in nature.[230] They are regarded

as historical literature as distinct from the *itihasa-s* and the *puranas* which

belong to the domain of ancient Indian historical tradition.[231] The *kavya-s* and the

carita-s marked the origin of historical biographies and historical narratives in

India. This new *genre* of historical narratives and historical biographies, centred

on individuals and events as distinct from the *itihasa-s* and the *purana-s* which

focused on the dominant lineage. The sense of continuity is visible in the *kavya-s*

and the *carita-s* in the sequence of events narrated in them. The *kavya-s* and the

carita-s have four components.

a)   Origin of the Patron and his *Vamsa*

b)   The personal qualities of the Patron

c)   The achievements of the Patron

d)   General overview of the state of affairs in the region

The historical facts are obliterated by the primacy accorded to the

panegyric beginning, end and gross exaggerations. These *Kavya-s* and *Carita-s*

traversed between the two paradigms of literature and history. These *Kavya-s* and

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[229] *Op. cit.* p.185.
[230] Romila Thaper. *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p.217.
[231] *Op. cit.* p. 218.

Caritas followed the literary conventions of the tradition. Since *Vamsa* being the criterion of social status in the traditional society, the authors of such historical literatures illustrated the greatness of their patrons through fabricated genealogies. They drew upon the *Vamsavalis* or family chronicles[232] and oral traditions maintained in the regions/kingdoms. Thus this historical literature marks "the shift from the heroic tradition to the Court tradition, from the tribal leader and tribe to the king and his court."[233] The court poet displaced *suta* and became the authority of historical knowledge. The authors of *kavya-s* and *carita-s* were well versed in the *puranic* tradition as most of them belonged to the literate groups (Brahmin *gotras*) continuity with the *itihasa puranic* tradition is to be sought in the narratives associating the patrons were depicted as related to the heroes and legends of the *puranic* tradition.[234] This *genre* of historical literature was rich in details, as they focused on specific regions, limited temporality, and specific individuals. The purpose of these historical biographies and historical narratives being eulogistic, the authors glossed over or at times even sacrificed the historical facts.[235]

The Socio Economic Roots of the *kavya-s* and the *carita-s* as Representations of past

The new trends in the appropriation of past in the *kavya-s* and the *carita-s* are to be located in the changed socio-economic political situations setting off towards the medieval period. The major aspects of these changes are described

[232] *Op. cit.* p. 264.
[233] *Op. cit.* p. 266.
[234] *Op. cit.* p. 274.
[235] Dr. T. Bhaskaran *Bharatheya Kavyasastram* (Mal) (Indian Poetics), Trivandrum, 1978, p.110.

through the framework of kali age in the Mahabharata and in many of the Puranas. "Though some trends paving the way for transition from antiquity to the middle ages were operating from earlier times, the central phase of the transition as the epigraphic evidence suggests appears to have commenced from the sixth century especially from the declining days of the Gupta empire.[236] The *Lingapurana* and the *Vayupurana* describes the decline in the population of cities in an exaggerated manner, in the sections dealing with the *Kali* age. The social tensions as a result of the Huna invasions, the decline in economic status, the consequent improvement in the conditions of the serfs, the decline of urban centres and the increasing number of villages are vividly described in the *puranas* as the features of the age of decadence (the Kali age).[237] The shift of political power from the state, to the Samantas (chiefs) in the post Gupta period is evident from the emergence of *mandala*s in different regions.[238] *Mandala* denoted a number of village (mandalam gramopalak sitam gramasamuhah).[239] The number of villages in the possession of ambitions chiefs, land lords and rulers increased and they tended to become more or less closed units of economy.[240] Such a state of affairs fostered local loyalties. The changed relations of production which centred on the ownership of land fostered the sense of dependence. It also fostered the feudal values of valour, loyalty and subordination. The historical literature of *kavya-s* and *carita-s* which were designed primarily to euologise the patrons were rooted in these peculiar socio economic and political circumstances.

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[236] B.N.S. Yadavas. "The Accounts of the Kali Age And The Transition From Antiquity To The Middle Age" in the *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. V. NOSI-2-1978-79, p.32.
[237] *Op. cit.* pp. 42-47.
[238] R.S. Sharma, *Survey of Research in Economic and Social History of India*, Delhi, 1986, pp.28-49
[239] *Op. cit.* p.41.
[240] *Op. cit.* p. 92.

An overview of the historical *kavyas* in Sanskrit

The *Raghuvamsa* of Kalidasa has nineteen *Sargas*. It narrates the names of thirty generations of kings from Dileepa the founder of *Raghu Vamsa*, to the last ruler Agni Varman. Historically the seventeenth and eighteenth Sargas described the heroic exploits of Dileepan, Raghu, Aja, Dasaratha, Rama, Kusa, Adithi and other rulers. Most of the themes, and legends are drawn from the *itihasa purana* tradition. The eighteenth *Sarga* deals with several events in the region of king Sudarsana - his misrule, and the court intrigues etc. It ends with the descriptions of the accession of Agni Varma. The *kavya* centers around "events of royalty, yagas, Dana (royal gifts) wars, royal marriages and royal hunting expeditions which are described in detail with literary ornamentation and gross exaggerations."[241]

Gaudapaho which eulogizes the heroic valour of Yasovarman the king of Kanouj is acclaimed as the earliest historical narrative in Sanskrit (725 A.D.). The court poet Vakpathi Raja, a contemporary Bhavabhuthi also gives an account of the defeat of his patron by the king of Kashmir Lalidatiya. The work is not available in complete form. *Bhuvanbooyam* by Sanghuka (814-851 A.D) narrates the war in Kashmir between Mammen and Utpalan. *Kalhana*'s references to the author and this work reveal the popularity of the work. But it is not available in complete form.

Rashtraudavamsa Kavyam (1596 A.D) by Rudrakavi the court poet of king Pratapashah of Mayooragiri describes the glories of *Bagula vamsa* and the history of the ancestors. The authors attempts to give a comprehensive account of the ruling dynasty of Mayooragiri in 20 chapters (Sargas).

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[241] Dr. K. Kunjunini Raja and Dr. M.S. Menon, *Samskrita Sahitya Charithram* (Mal), Trichur, 1991, pp. 146-147.

The *Lagukavya-s* which are known by the epithet *Vilasa* also deal with specific individuals and regions narrates the wisdom and services of the 'Vastupalaka' the great amatya of the ruler, Veeradhava. Similarly in *Somapala Vilasam* (12th cent A.D) the hero is Somapala the minister of Rajapuri. Kalhana the court poet who hails from Kashmir also includes the war between Sompala and Sussala the king of Kashmir.

Mooshakavamsa kavya narrates the early history of Kolathunad, the ruling *Vamsa* & its glories. It is believed that Athula the court poet of *Sreekanda* the king of Kolathunad might have written this *kavya* between 1012 and 1043. Imitating the literary conventions of *Mahakavya-s* and also combining the indigenous patterns of *ulpatti, Mooshakavamsa kavya* narrates the rule of 95 rajas. The first six *Sargas* associate the *Vamsa* with the hero Parasurama. The eleventh *Sarga* in *Anushootoop* verse resembles *vamsavali* designed for narration. The *Sargas* (11 to 14) describe the rule of nineteen rajas. The 15th *Sarga* ends with the descriptions of the coronation and ceremony of Raja Sreekanda. Saluva Dhudyam by the court poet Rajanatha Didiman is composed before Narasimha Saluva ascended the throne in Vijayanagar. It is roughly assigned to 1480 A.D.[242] It is mainly deals with the glories of *Saluva Vamsa* and the heroic deeds of Narasimha Saluva of Vijayanagar.

Mathura Vijayam which portrays the early history of Vijayanagar is significant as one of the sources for the later historical writings on Vijayanagar.

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[242] Dr. M.R. Krishnamachariar, *A History Classical Sanskrit Literature*, Delhi, 1989, p.210. Dr. Raghava Varier and Dr. Rajan Gurukkal, *Keralacharithram* (Mal), Sukapuranam, 1989, p.4.

The work which centres round the king *Kambana*, his achievements, conquests in the south and war with Muslims gives primacy to bravery (Virarasa). This incomplete *Kavya* ends with the defeat of the Muslims by *Kambana*. *Mathuravijayam* is in the paradigm of the *Kavya-s* of Kalidasa, but rich in historical elements. *Prabodha Chinthamani* (1306 AD) attempts to give a comprehensive account of the Satavahana, Chalukya and *Vakela Raja Vamsas*. The *Kavya* written by Meruthankan attaches great significance to *Vamsavali* and the mutual relations of these political powers.[243] Rajenda *Karnapuram* (11th century A.D.) eulogies Harsha. This eulogistic *Kavya* written by the court poet Sambhu retains historical elements.[244] *Keerthe Kaumudi* (13th cent A.D) narrates the significance of the Chalukya vamsa of Gujarat. In 533 slokas this *Kavya* attempts to narrate the list of the Chalukya rules of Gujarat from Bhima who is depicted as the great ancestor. It also offers the *Vamsavali* of the ministers of the Chalukya rulers in Gujarat. Someswara the poet who belongs to the Purohita group of Chalukya kings reveals his knowledge of the itihasa *purana* tradition and oral tradition in this work.

Hammiramaha Kavya by Nayachandra is designed to narrate the heroic story of Chaukan king Hammira. In accordance with the convention the ancestry of king Hammira is narrated with all poetic grandeur. The *kavya* is significant for the detailed account of the war between the Rajputs and the Turks. The wars Prithiviraja III and his son Hariraja waged against the Turks are narrated in the

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[243] *Op. cit.* p. 351.
[244] *Op. cit.* p. 354.

literary style of *kavya-s*. The heroic resistance of king Hammira to the invasions of Aluddin Khilji is the climax of this *kavya*. Garbed in the values of Rajputs and their ethos, the *kavya* ends in tragedy with the defeat of king Hammira and his heroic death Padmavati and the epic on the Paramara king Sindhu raja of Avanti are examples of romantic legends which has historical basis. Cosmogenic ideas of puranic traditions are drawn upon heavily in the Panegyric accounts of the heroes. Thus they become mystic interpretations of history.

Rajatarangini (chronicles of Kashmir) by Kalhana is acclaimed as the earliest history of Kashmir.[245] Kalhana hailing from the Brahmin *gotra* of Kashmir is well versed in the *itihasa puranic* tradition has strong sense of evidences, and historical truths. His work *Rajatarangini* which was started in 1148 A.D. was completed in two years. *Rajatarangini* is a general history of Kashmir and not of any particular dynasty. Kalhana claims that he has made a thorough use of the past resources, contemporary documents, edicts, inscriptions, coins, and the earlier works on the history of Kashmir. Most of the sources especially the earlier works on the history of Kashmir are not available to us. Kalhana claims that he corrects the errors in the earlier works on Kashmir by verifying them with the ordinances of former kings, laudatory inscriptions as well as written records. Another significant feature of *Rajatarangini* is the proper chronological order and the judgements of the author on various events.

Rajatarangini is a work of approximately 8000 verses in Sanskrit. Books I to III narrates the past history of Kashmir as revealed from Traditions.

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[245] R.C. Majumdar, *Historiography of India,* Delhi, 1992, p. 303.

Book IV to VI narrate the histories of Karkota and Utpala dynasties. This portion is written on the basis of works of contemporaries or near contemporaries. Book VII and VIII give an account of the two Lohara dynasties which ruled Kashmir. Being a contemporary, Kalhana utilises his personal knowledge and the events are presented from the dimensions of an impartial eye witness. *Rajatarangini* makes a sincere attempt to provide a true history of Kashmir in verse. He presents a broad framework in which different rulers are depicted. The beginnings are traced to the legendary king Lava, which asserts the halo of greatness of the ruling family. The events of the reigns of Lalitaditya, Yasaskara, Meghavaham Mihirakula, Uccala and Jayasinha. His descriptions of events is impartial. This historical biography also evaluates the activities of these various rulers. His notion of historiography which retains lesser degree of mythologies is a clear improvement on the romantic legends of Bana, Bilhana and Jayanaka. *Rajatarangini* pictures an age of turmoil, insecurity. The resistance to invasions, adventures of nobles, corrupt bureaucrats, court conspiracies, palace intrigues all are depicted faithfully. The caricature of different personalities and their peculiarities reveals the keen observation of the author. Local administration, system of law, management of revenue and societal structure are also discussed.

An overview of the *carita-s* as representations of past

The *carita-s* like the *kavya-s* are numerous. They flourish mostly from 600-1400 A.D. The *genre* of historical biography in the form of *carita* on the model of the literary style of *kavya-s* originates with Harsha *carita* composed by the court poet Banabhatta. It is composed in the first quarter of the seventh

century A.D. Bana being a member of the *Bhargava* lineage is well acquainted with the domain of ancient historical tradition. In this *carita* bana does not give a total picture of Harshas reign till the end. Narration of the series of events in the reign of Harsha is not the motive of Bana. Rather he attempts to project the legitimacy of the succession of Harsha the youngest son to the throne. Naturally the treachery of the Mukhari king and the war with Mukhari kingdom is central in this *Kavya*. Like *Harshacarita*, *Vikramanka Devacarita* too focus on situations of tensions. here the crisis over succession to the throne and the fratricidal war are pangegyrically coloured in favour of the patron Vikramaditya VI, the chalukya king of Kalyani. Bilhana the author of this *carita* also is of Brahmin descent. The traditional pattern of mythology is relied upon in this *carita*. The war between the cholas and chalukyas, and the exploits of Vikramaditya VI are also discussed. Inspite of the presence of historical elements Vikramanga *devacarita* cannot be considered as purely historical because it gives only highly partial account of the king. This *Carita* in the literary style of *Kavya* also mixes up romance and other stories while narrating the life story of the patron Vikramaditya VI. Bilhana tries to assemble historical elements in to an intelligible fabric though he is not able to keep away the traditional pattern.[246]

"If we do not want to reduce the medieval history in to a mere chronicle of events, a rope of sand instead of historical wreath, with events strung on the thread of ideas we shall have to study the events and facts in the context of the cultural complex of the medieval historians and to understand

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[246] R.C. Majumdar and A.N. Srivastva, *Historiography*, New Delhi, 1992, p.298.

sympathetically their ideas however antiquated they may be"[247] *Rama Carita* of

Sandhayakaranandin speaks of the glories of pala king Ramapala. The author like

Banabhatta narrates the significant events of the reign of king Ramapala, and a

little bit of autobiography in this epic. He introduces two plots in this epic poem.

The epic poem is rich in analogies between Rama the epic hero of the solar

dynasty and Ramapala who invades the kingdom of his enemy Bhima and the

recovery of the empire from him. Like other *caritas* the beginning of this poem

deals with origins of the pala dynasty in the traditional pattern of

supernaturalism. The ancestry of the royal family of palas is elaborated through

legends and myths. The core of the *carita* deals with the fratricidal war between

the eldest son Mahipala II and the youngest son Ramapala. He evaluates the

kings as wicked/wise through descriptions of their policies, though in the colours

with imagination and exaggerations. *Rama carita* also describes some of the

campaigns of Ramapala against the neighbours as well as the various measures

introduced for the reorganisation of administration and in support of learning.

Sandayakaranandin the author also gives a narrative of the reigns of the sons of

Ramapala namely Kumarapala and Mandapala.

Another historical prose narrative of ancient India is

Vikramankabhyadaya, an incomplete biography of the Chalukya king

Vikramaditya VI. This work consists of three chapters and they deal with a

graphic description of the geography and people of Karnataka. The splendour of

the court and the history of the Chalukyas from the earliest times to the reign of

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[247]   Vishawambhar Sharan Pathak, *Ancient Historians of India*, Bombay, 1966, p.87.

Vikramaditya VI are also described. Someswara III the author of this historical

biography is the son of Vikramaditya. The halo of the royal family of Chalukyas

is the core of this historical biography. Divine will, supernatural forces are

invoked heavily and often the pattern of narratives resembles the earlier

akhyayna-s. The historical elements are embedded in stories.

The epic *Prithvirajavijayam* praises the heroic deeds of chauhana ruler of

northern Rajasthan. Jayanaka a native of Kashmir derives inspiration from the

epic Ramayana and *Prithvirajavijayam* is composed in the framework of heroic

legend. It is laced with biographical sketches. This *kavya* is composed between

1191 and 1193 after the two battles of Tarain. In conformity with the prevailing

literary conventions, Jayanaka traces the ancestry of the chauhans to the solar

dynasty. Prithviraja III is hailed as an incarnate of Vishnu who saved the

kingdoms from the mlecchas. Here the author gives a graphic description of the

state of affairs in and around Rajasthan. In depicting the Queen, the author draws

insights from the tradition of Tilottama and Urvasi.[248] Thus he adopts the literary

conventions, to show his genius as a poet. In the later portions of this *kavya* the

author Jayanaka refers to the importance of historical evidence and inscriptions

which are employed by him as sources for his work. Chandra another court poet

composed the *Kavya Prithiviraajarasa*. The work traces the origin of the

chauhan family from the sacrificial fire and narrates the heroic deeds of

Prithviraj. The author derives his ideas and pattern from various ballads, oral

traditions, epics and other *kavya-s* and *carita-s* which existed in many regions of

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[248] A.K. Warder, *An Introduction to Indian Historiography*, Bombay, 1932, p. 67.

Northern India. It is more a romantic legend and "in its historical value it is much inferior to the work of Jayanaka." *Navashasanka carita* of Padma Gupta eulogises the patron, the king of Munja. It is ascribed to the first quarter of the 10th century. The *Kumarapala Carita* of Hemacandra (1088 A.D) is a poem of 28 cantos. The first part of the work which is in Sanskrit describes the exploits the patron Anhuilvad, the king of Gujarat.

In Keralam, *caritams*, the poetic narratives were composed in the linguistic mixture of Sanskirt and old Malayalam they are assigned to 1300-1600 A.D. *Caritams* which retain a few perspectives of the past are genuinely interesting, the most notable of them being *Unniaccicaritam, Unniyaticaritam* and *Unniccirutevicaritam*. They are different from the *ulpatti* pattern and the *puranic* traditions though not without similarities. Primarily what set aside them is their objective which is neither the legitimization of Brahmanic dominance nor the popularization of the Vedic religion, or the representation of the past itself. But their objective is the poetic presentation of a theme centred on passion, the core of them being the descriptions of the celestial beauty of three courtesans devadasis, Unniaci, Unniyati, and Unniccirutevi comparable to apsaras. The repeated occurrence of prayers at many points especially the invocation at the beginnings suggests a kind of relationship with the *puranic* traditions. Except for the reference to the story of Gardua in the *Unniacci caritam puranic* themes are generally absent in them. Their theme and climax, introductory description locate them in the context of *caritams* in other parts of India. The references to Katirur, and Pakkannar in *Unniaccicaritam* and Sandesa in *Unniccirutevi caritam*

indicate the familiarity of these authors with the prevalent oral traditions. The *caritams* have "a recognizable literary form with well defined phases of introduction and climax of plot/theme."[249]

Unniacci the devadasi of the Thirumarudur temple in Wynad is the central figure of the first *caritam*. The story begins with the Gandarva who chanced to see her and be fascinated by the heroine, comes down to the earth in search of her abode and succeeds in the attempt. The text is incomplete but fulfils the chief requirement namely description of the heroine. *Unniyaticaritam* focuses on Unniyati the devadasi of *Kandiyur* temple, and the daughter of Iravikerala Varma of Odanadu. It narrates the story of her previous birth as pravoot and the curse caused by chandra before ending with the description of the arrival of the two celestial personages Suvakan and Mathi Deepan deputed by Chandra. *Unnichirutevicaritam* depicts the journey of Indra from heaven to earth to have a glance at the heroine unnichirutevi, the devadasi of Poyilam, South Malabar and the daughter of a reputed chief. The structure of the caritam has enabled the author to describe in detail the landscape and other aspects closely associated with the social and cultural context of Keralam. This distinctive feature of *caritams* provides us with the contexts for historical explanations. The conception of heaven and the world as constituting single space which occurs in native traditions is visible here.

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[249] See the relevant discussion on the features of Caritams in Romila Thapar, "Historical writing in Ancient India," *Ancient Indian Social History some interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 274-275.

A close reading of the texts indicates three forms of exchange which the author performs. First with the God, second with the reader and third with the specific character other than the heroine. Here the focus is on the ideas of past revealed through the latter forms of exchange and how they constitute a sense of the past.

Famous temples, swarupams, nadus, markets, trading centres, names of monarchs[250] details of coinage, and different occupational groups are presented through these exchange between the author and the reader, or the subcharacter of the theme. It is significant that it also implies a set of socio-economic relations in the particular social system. The references to landed aristocracy and the satire on brahmins who roamed about and enjoyed the privileges indicate the suppressed social tensions of the age. There is no emphasis on dana or on the legend of Parasurama. In short, the *caritams* embody the collective experiences. The long list of agricultural products reveals the prosperity of farming.

The framework of the *caritams* which can accommodate Kolathunad and Venad in single line or prayers to God and the beauty of the heroine as successive, contradict the modern ideas on continuity. Local loyalties account for the glorified accounts of places and rulers. To sum up, the historical sense present in the *caritams* of Kerala has two indications, first, it was primarily the product of the socio-economic and political structures of the regions, second the concept of universal history or even history which includes the alien (Paradesi) was a phenomenon unthought of.

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[250] Often name of the dynasty is the signifier. Individual names figure rarely.

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The *caritas* a *genre* of literature which arise out of growing regionalism are (a) a continuation of the *kavya* tradition with modification (b) the products towards the final phases of the evolution of regional languages (c) the types of literature which are designed to convey the rasa of Bhakti or Veeram (d) the types of literature which focus on beautiful ladies, and the description of places which are on the way to their abode.

The authors of the *kavya* and *carita* tradition retain notions of *Pramanya* (authoritative) as the basis of knowledge. This is evident from the fact that the themes and ideas are borrowed from different sources. But the following features are significant in this context. They are (a) the absence of the distinction between source and fact (b) the absence of distinction between primary sources and Secondary sources (c) the absence of distinction between myths, legends-facts. Myths and legends which are a part of the cultural order and belief systems are applied as truth. Hence their historical explanations are strongly influenced by the ideological assumptions, and value judgements about kingship which prevailed in the society. Hence the interpretations are in accordance with the ethos of contemporary society. In the case of the *kavya* and *carita* traditions the authors are acquainted with a large number of sources. Half of the sources are experiential and hence subjective. Most of the authors being court poets, were acquainted with the manners of the court and customs of other regions. They utilise these experiences and observation in the composition of their works.

Thus sources of the traditional compositions are "largely disconnected material detached from a large context illustrative but neither serial nor synoptic."[251]

The pre-colonial forms of representation are discussed above because these can be regarded as the pan-Indian model. The *ulpatti* pattern, the different categories of songs such as *padai pattukal, thottam pattukal, theyyam pattukal* and other categories of popular songs displayed remarkable similarities with the categories of tradition discussed in the pan-Indian model. *Genres* of literature such as *ula, parani, kathipadalkal, nattupadalkal, pallupadalkal, tutu* which existed in Tamilakam also shared the framework of either one of the categories in the pan-Indian model. These pre-colonial forms of representation of past in Tamilakam and Keralam are discussed in detail in the subsequent chapter.

To conclude, the representation of past in the pre-colonial society in India was pluralistic in nature. It was an admixture of fictional history. Different *genres* were employed to diffuse knowledge of the past. Thus representation of past was associated with myths, genealogy, narratives, poetry and drama. These forms of representation of past were sensible in the pre-modern epistemic order which had its own world view, epistomological positions and logic. The pre-colonial forms of representation mixed up archaic memories with the social, economic situations of immediate past. This made them sensible and acceptable.

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[251] Mortonfinley, *Ancient History Evidence and Models*, New York, 1987, p.12.

Chapter III

The Mapping of Tamilakam and Keralam in Colonial Historiography

This section seeks to discuss the factors that prompted the historians of South of India to undertake the reconstruction of history of their own regions. It inquires as to how far colonial Indian historiography set the model for the writing of history in colonial South India. In the process of following the colonial master narrative, how historical interpretations embodied sentiments of cultural/regional identities is another question considered here. Similarly the section examines as to how the brahminical and anti-brahminical loyalties have worked in determining the structure and content of South Indian historiography. How the geographical definitions of regions, population and culture by historians have involved uncritically accepted notions and a taken for granted approach is another issue focussed in the section. It seeks to primarily reveal the autonomy exercised by the historians in the mapping of Tamilakam and Keralam. The assumptions, themes and interpretations that went into the mapping of Tamilakam and Keralam thus form the core of the chapter.

Geographical definitions of regions and the historicisation of such regions are considered as the primary requisites for the mapping of regions in any historiography. The colonial historiography of India and South India are significant for their emphasis on the identification of geographical units and

historical units. This is made possible by employing different parameters. Geography, culture, language and race are the parameters employed by historians for the mapping of regions in historiography. There are also assumptions and themes behind the mapping of regions.

There is no single scientific criterion in South Indian historiography for the mapping of regions. The geographical units as defined in historiography reveal that the depended criteria were what each scholar considered appropriate. Thus criteria of definition of regions and the construction of historical units are not absolute. But they are derived from the choice of historians. Thus they are interpretative in nature. This is illustrated through the geographical formulations in the colonial historiography of India, South India and South of India because historiography of India always set the model for the historians of South India.

Geographical Formulations in Colonial Historiography of India

British Statesmen authored the pioneer historical texts. In Geographical terms, India was designated as the Indian subcontinent. These imperialist writers assigned primary to latitude and longitude as the criteria for the geographical defined India as "the portion of Asia comprised between the 37th and 8th degrees of latitude north."[1] They employed the same principle of latitude in the definition of South India also. In the very same perspective they regarded Ceylon as an extension of South India.[2] Meanwhile European and West Asian writers had applied the word India to the whole of the main land of South Asia irrespective

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[1]   Paul Masson Ousel. *History of Hindoostan*, London, 1934, p.14.
[2]   *Op.cit.* p. 15.

of political boundaries for over 2000 years.[3] It is revealed that river basins were also taken as the criteria for the construction of geographical units in India[4] (see Map 3:1). The river systems of Sindhu and Ganga were employed to define geographical units in India north of the Vindhyas. Regions north of the Vindhyas were regarded as Hindustan, a name derived from the name of the river Sindhu.

> "The Persians who found difficulty in pronouncing an initial s' called it Hindu. From Persia the word passed to Greece where the whole of India became known by the name of the western river. The earlier names which the natives used to denote their land such as Jambu dvipa (the continent of the Jambu tree) or Bharatavarsa (the land of the sons of Bharata a lengendary figure) were replaced by the term Hindustan. The inhabitants who followed their old religion were regarded as Hindus."[5]

The Persian and Arab chronicles which were the earliest foreign sources to the history of India named the land as Hindustan on the basis of the Sindhu river system. Western scholars who were engaged in the writing of history of India adopted this practice of defining regions in India on the basis of river systems. The Persian chronicles employed the term Hindustan to denote adjoining regions of the Sindhu river system.[6] The traditional Sanskrit literature of India too followed this method of geographical definitions of regions in the north, on the basis of river Systems.[7] The traditional Sanskrit literature focused on the regions of upper Ganges river system and designated the land as *Aryavarta*

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[3]   A.L. Bhasham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Calcutta, 1985 (Reprint, p.2).

[4]   Walter Hamilton, *A Description of Hindoostan*, London, 1820, p.12.

[5]   A.L. Bhasham, *A Cultural History of India*, New Delhi, 1954, p. 5. The earliest evidence for this in written form comes from Alberuni's accounts of India. He calls the land as Hind inhabited by "Hindus who are entire different from us in every respect many a subject appearing intricate and obscure which would perfectly clear if there were more connections between us." He speaks of Hind as "the continent located to the eastern part which protrudes far into the seas in the western half of the earth and extends its shore in the far South." Edward C. Sachau (trans.) *Alberunis India*, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1978, p.4.

[6]   *Op.cit.* p. 7.

[7]   C.Narayanan Nambuthiri, (trans) *Rig Veda*, Trichur, 1989, Vol IX V:18, V:19.

(abode of the Aryans)[8]. Later when traditional Sanskrit literature was employed as the indigenous source for the historiography of India, western scholars designated the regions of the Sindhu river system and upper Ganges river system as Hindustan.[9] The Indologists too assigned primacy to the principle of river systems for the geographical formulation of India. While they designated the regions of Sindhu river system and upper Ganges river system as Hindustan, they regarded the regions of upper Ganges river system as the heartland of Hindustan because Aryan culture and Aryan race in India were axiomatic in their writings.[10]

This practice of adopting river systems as the criterion for the geographical formulations of India was considered as obsolete. It was pointed out that this was an error. Due to this method the Indo Chinese Peninsula has been called as Trans-Gangetic India and that the American continent was called the West Indies.[11] The criterion of river systems was replaced by the principle of geographical system. This was regarded as more scientific for the identification of geographical units. The river systems and mountain ranges were combined as features demarcating one region from the other. By this India got defined as "the subcontinent extending from the Hindukush mountains to Ceylon, from Seistan to Irrawaddy."[12] The Scholars who adopted this criterion defined Hindustan as

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[8]   A.D. Pusalker, *Studies in the Epics and Puranas,* Bombay, 1955 and also see Ralph Griffith *Ramayana of Valmiki,* Benares, 1895, p. X.

[9]   The native scholars too adopted this method. To cite a few examples, R.C. Dutt, *The Ancient History of India,* Calcutta, 1888 pp 6-9 and also see R.C. Dutt. *The Epics And Lays of Ancient India.* Calcutta, 1890. pp. 4-6.

[10]   To cite few examples Tolboy Wheeler, *India of Vedic Age with Reference to Mahabharata,* Delhi, 1953 and William Jackson, (ed) *History of India,* New Delhi, 1987 (Reprint).

[11]   Walter Hamilton, *A Description of Hindoostan,* London, 1820 p. 14.

[12]   *Op.cit.* p. 16.

the land of the Sindhu - Ganges river systems (the regions north of Vindhyas).[13]

There were geographical definitions of India that took mountains as boundaries.

Mountains were regarded not only as natural barriers but also as sources of river

systems. The mountain passes that provided accessibility to regions on either

side were assigned great significance.[14] Such regions which had contact with

other regions were prioritised over regions which had less accessibility to other

regions due to geographical barriers. The regions with limited accessibility were

treated as excluded regions which are static in development. In Indian

historiography Malwa and Malabar are identified as isolated regions. Such

regions are regarded as regions "where people pass either military or peaceful

invasion with no persistent political tradition."[15]

Historians like Vincent Smith, P.E. Roberts, Grantduff recognised

mountains and seas as the natural frontiers that demarcate India as a geographical

unit. India is defined as:

> "the land which consists of Himalayan system, the great northern
> alluvial plains, the broken central plateau of Malwa, and Bundel
> Khand, the Deccan the triangular shaped peninsula of south."[16] "The
> India of this book is almost exclusively the geographical unit called by
> that name on the ordinary maps of the days before partition bounded
> on the north, Northwest and north east by mountain Ganges and
> elsewhere by the seat."[17] Appropriating this model, India is defined as
> "the sharply demarcated subcontinent bounded on the north by the
> worlds largest mountain range the claim of the Himalayas with its

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[13] The early historical texts on India followed this definition invariably. See Ramachandra Ghosha The Indo Aryans. Their *History, creed and practice,* Calcutta 1881, Tolby Wheeler, *History of vedic age with reference to Mahabharata,* London, 1953.

[14] E.J. Rapson, *The Cambridge History of India* Vol.1, New Delhi 1987 (Reprint) pp. 4-5.

[15] This characterisation is treated as one of the limitations of Indian historiography. For further details see Bernad S. Cohen "Regions subjective and objective Their relation to the study of modern Indian society" in Thomas R. Metcalf (ed) *Modern India,* New Delhi 1990. pp. 109-137.

[16] P.E. Roberts. *History of British India,* New Delhi, 1921, p. 17.

[17] Vincent A. Smith, *The Early History of India,* New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint) p.4.

extensions to the east and the west. Cape comorin is designated as the southern most boundary."[18] India was defined as "the subcontinent extending from the Himalayas to Ceylon."[19] India was also defined as "extending from the Himalayas to Ceylon and as including Southeast Asia."[20]

In these definitions the criteria of definition remained the political system. So the adjoining regions of the Indian sub-continent which were regions of the British Indian Empire were also included as the geographical units of India.

Thus even the geographical formulations of India reveal that there is no single geographical definition of India. On the other hand there were many geographical definitions of India. This is explicit in the definitions of South India too. Combining geographical system and political system of South India created the definitions of South India. Besides these two factors, the race, culture and language were also employed as the criteria for the definition of South India.

Geographical and Political Definitions of South India

The pioneer scholars like William Jackson, Ramachandra Dutt, Griffith, and R.G. Bhandarkar attempted to define South India in the light of traditional Sanskrit literature. Geographically South India was designated as "the portion of the Indian peninsula lying to the South of the Narmada."[21] R.G. Bhandarkar introduced the two-fold geographical formulation of India – the North and the Deccan. Later he introduced the three-fold division of India namely the north, the

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[18]   P.E. Roberts. *History of British India*, New Delhi, 1921, p. 4.
[19]   E.J. Rapson, *The Cambridge History of India* Vol. I, New Delhi 1987, (Reprint) p. 6.
[20]   Meadows Taylor, *A Students Manual of The History of India* London, 1904, p.19 and also see Robert Sewell. *A Forgotten* Empire New Delhi, 1980, (Reprint) Sir Alfred Lyall, The Rise And *Expansion of the British* Empire, London, 1919.
[21]   Rama Krishna Gopal Bhandarkar, *Early History of the Dekhan*, Bombay, 1895, p.7.

Deccan and the South. By South was broadly defined as the region that consisted

of the four linguistic regions of modern age (Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and

Kannada). He never intended to specify Tamilakam as the far south. The term

Deccan is coined from the terms *Dandakaranya/Dakshenapatha* which were

used in traditional Sanskrit literature. The rivers Krishna and Thungabhadra are

recognised as the southern boundaries of the unit. The Deccan was also defined

as the entire peninsula of South India "the entire land beyond the Vindhyas to the

seas as Deccan.[22] Robert Sewell who attempted to construct the history of

Vijayanagar defined South India as the region between Deccan and Ceylon.[23]

South India is also regarded as the adjoining coast which extends in a high land

from north to south and so this region is called *Dechina* for Deccan to mean

south in the language of the natives.[24] The monograph, *The Early Muslim*

Expansion in South India which focuses on the establishment of 'the great Hindu

Empire of Vijayanagar,' conceives the Kingdom of the Kakatiyas, the Hoysalas

and the Pandyas constituting the peninsula of South India.[25] Later with the

publication of inscriptions scholars created new geographical units in the land

extending from South of the Vindhyas to the seas. In this peninsular region of

India two territorial segments are identified viz; the Deccan and the far South.

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[22] This territory was regarded as the land of non-Aryan demon worshippers. R.C. Dutt, *The Ancient History of India*, New Delhi, 1888, p.123.

[23] Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, New Delhi, 1980 (Reprint), p.9.

[24] *Op.cit.* p.12.

[25] N. Venkata Ramanayya, *The Early Muslim Expansion In South India*, Madras, 1943, p.16.

The boundaries of these geographical units were also defined differently since these units were perceived on the basis of political definitions of regions in various inscriptions.[26]

After the model of nation states the "general histories of India"[27] attempted to define South India in terms of historical regions and linguistic zones. Four linguistic zones and more than a dozen historical zones were identified in the regions south of the Vindhyas. Tamil, Canarese, Telugu and Malayalam are identified as the linguistic zones. The Deccan is politically defined as the region of Kakatiyas and Hoysalas. The Deccan was the coveted object of many adventurous monarchs of North India. Thus in course of few centuries there were several dominions in the Deccan in addition to the three original kingdoms i.e., the Chera Chola and the Pandya.[28] The Deccan is also politically defined as the region of the kingdoms of Warangal, Western Chalukyas, Kadambas, Gangas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagara and Mysore. The boundaries of these kingdoms are regarded as depending "on the power of the monarch and the weakness of the rivals."[29]

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[26]　To illustrate an example, Vincent Smith considers Orissa and Bengal "as regions in Dekhan as they are lands opened to the sea coast of India" Vincent A. Smith, *The Early History of India*, New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint) p.14. But Indian historiography incorporates these regions as regions in the historical unit of Hindustan. To cite an example Arun Bhattacharya, *A History of Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1979 (Reprint).

[27]　This term is used to designate the historical works of a general nature, which appeared in the 19th century. These historical writings by contemporary English officials and statesmen were comprehensive in nature and historicised India from the standpoint of British officials. Minute details of British domination and administration are available. Thus they put forth only the empirical view of British transactions in India. They ignored the dissident views and the social, religious, literary movements which characterised the 19th century. To cite a few examples V.A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India* (1919). P.E. Roberts, *History of British India* (1921) Thompson and Garratt, *History of British* Empire *in India* (1934).

[28]　K.V. Subramania Iyer, *Historical Sketches of Dekhan*, Madras, 1917, pp.17-18.

[29]　Robert Sewell, *Analytical History of India*, London, 1869, p.8.

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South India is politically defined as consisting of two regions "the kingdom of Magadha in the north the Southern boundary of which was Tamilakam in the Southern most part of the peninsula."[30] Thus within the unit South India yet another geographical unit is identified. Flanked by the Western ghats and the eastern ghats the southern most region is recognised as the South of India. "The extensive region may be described in modern terms as consisting of the Madras Presidency excluding the northern circas Districts of Vizhakhapatnam and Ganjam and with the addition of the native states of Travancore and Cochin.[31] The southeastern part of the peninsula was regarded as the Tamil country.[32] It is defined as "the region of languages in no way akin to those of the north and are of a different ethnic character."[33] Thus the southern regions from the Krishna/Tungabadra rivers to Capecomorin is designated as the 'Distant south,' 'Extreme south' and 'the far South.' The early administrator historians included Ceylon as an extension of South India because "the island was a part of the British Indian Empire.[34] A group of historical regions are identified in the far South. "The Cholamandalam extending from Nellore to Pudukotta abutted on the Pandya territory extending over the entire coast are identified as the historical regions. The British political system categorised Cholamandalam, the Pandya kingdom and the Kongunadu in Malabar as

[30]   V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1904, p.2.
[31]   Vincent A. Smith, *The Early History of India*, New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint) 9.11.
[32]   H.H. Dodwell, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India*, London, 1969 (Reprint), p.179.
[33]   A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That was India*, New Delhi, 1963, p.22.
[34]   Walter Hamilton, *A Description of Hindoostan*, London, 1820, p.12.

Madras Presidency and the kingdoms of Travancore and Cochin as the Malabar District."[35]

Thus the colonial historiography of India politically defined the peninsula of South India as consisting of two segments – the Deccan and extreme south. They are treated as exclusive in terms of language, culture and royal lineages.[36] The Deccan is regarded as an extension of 'Hindustan' in terms of culture. The kingdoms in the Deccan are regarded as "an offshoot of the culture of northern India."[37] These regions are regarded as regions that underwent a greater degree of Aryanisation.[38] Thus south of India is delimited to the Kongu country, Tondaimandalam and Malabar.[39] The political definitions of regions knit together different kingdoms and historical regions are constituted accordingly. Overlooking political history that reveals spatial and temporal discontinuities in historical regions, historians attributed historical continuity to these regions. This continuity extends from the post-Gupta period to the beginnings of the British Empire. It was also assumed that these kingdoms if knit together represent the entire region of the Deccan, while in reality there are also regions which are excluded or partially represented within these assumed entities. Thus the political definition of South India reveals the problems of the level of aggregation and disaggregation as well as the limited coverage spatially and

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[35]   Vincent A Smith, *The Early History of India*, New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint), p.11.
[36]   It is pointed out that the basis of regional history in South India was the assumption that the differences between extreme south and Vindhya regions are less than the differences between Vindhyan and transvindhyan India, Ashok Settar, N. Subramanian's Studies in South Indian History. SIHC proceedings. Dharward, 1991, p. 219.
[37]   H.H. Dodwell, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India*, London, 1969 (Reprint), p.169.
[38]   Robert Sewell, *Analytical History of India*, London, 1869, p.186.
[39]   *Op.cit.* p.188.

temporally affordable in a given text. The reduction of the total space of South India to a centre is achieved with the help of one of the figures of speech namely synecdoche – taking part for the whole use of the synecdoche enables this conception of a historical unity of South India.[40] The historiographic reflections of the far south resurface the same problems of the different levels of aggregation and disaggregation. This is illustrated through self-reflexivity of the historians on the representation of South India in Indian Historiography.

The historiography of India considered southern most regions of India as a part of the larger unit of South India. Thus in colonial Indian historiography, the far south has no independent existence. The representation of Southern India as a part of South India, in spite of its heterogeneous nature was considered as revealing the inadequate representation of South of India. The native historians of Southern India believed that such an aggregation in historiography was biased.

Biased Representation and Southern India

The colonial historians of Southern India found the preoccupation of natives and western scholars with the traditional Sanskrit literature and Aryan civilisation as problematic. The historians of Southern India questioned the image of Southern India as articulated in the general histories of India as it is derived from the traditional Sanskrit literature. There was growing consciousness among the intelligentsia of Southern India that their region was under represented in the historiography of India in terms of quality and quantity.

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[40] Dr. S. Raju, "Excurses on South India And State in Historiography," in Champaklakshmi et.al eds. *State and society in pre-modern India*, Thrissur, 2002, p.183

The representation of Southern India in the Ramayana is regarded as inadequate and biased as the *itihasa* is "supposed to indicate one of the earlier phases of the Aryan expansion."[41] "An imaginative poet from bits of hearsay information assesses the references to South India in the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha. The text itself has undergone continuous embellishment so that any attempt to derive history from these sources will be as Nilakantasastri says like trying to read history in the Arthurian legends."[42] It was found that the spasmodic references to the South in the literary works of Panini and Katyana and the references to the South in the Ramayana were reiterated in the historiography of India. It was criticised that the representation of ancient history of South India in the historiography of India was based on very limited sources such as the traditional Sanskrit literature, the edicts of Asoka and the travelogues of ancient geographers.[43] This representation of India in limited sources is regarded as "a delusion due more to the lack of information than to the lack of history."[44] The stories in the Mahabharata attributing the three lineages – the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas to the lunar race are regarded as illustrating "the tendency to trace everything Indian to what was in use on the country of Magadha."[45] The civilising role of Aryans in traditional Sanskrit literature is criticised as "stretch of the imagination and this cannot be sufficient authority to warrant the advancement of a theory that one was borrowed from the other.[46] The historians

[41] T.N. Subramanian, *History of Tamil Nadu To 1565 AD*, Madras, 1914, p.22.
[42] *Op.cit.* 24.
[43] S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *The Beginnings of South Indian History*, Madras, 1917, p.112.
[44] K.V. Subramania Iyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, Madras, 1917, p.78.
[45] *Op.cit.* p.14.
[46] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.73.

of Southern India meticulously studied the sources employed for the representation of Southern India in Indian historiography. They contradicted the conclusions which were historicised in Indian historiography. The travelogues and the edicts of Asoka were employed by the native historians to assert that South India was not a land of tribes and it was not an integral part of the Mauryan Empire. This assigns the "status of independence to the far south which" has distinct individuality of its own.[47] The independence and identity of southern regions of India are projected to illustrate that the far south is an independent/separate entity.

The historians were aware of the discrimination between the traditional Sanskrit literature and the corpus of the Tamil Heroic Poems as literary sources in Indian historiography. This is attributed to the "neglect of the development of literature by the national mind."[48] The omission of the far south in the historiography of India as "due to the lack of acquaintance with the language and culture of the people"[49] is criticised by the historians of Southern India. Thus there was consciousness about the inadequate representation of Southern India in Indian Historiography. There was growing consciousness among the intelligentsia in the south that the vast body of indigenous literature in the south did not receive any attention from the historians of India as sources. Pioneer historians such as Robert Sewell, R.K. Bhandarker and Vincent Smith assumed that the paradigms of Dravidian languages and Dravidian culture are sufficient

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[47] K.V. Subramania Iyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, Madras, 1917, p.117.
[48] K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, *The Chronology of the Early Tamils*, Madras, 1932, p.43.
[49] Vincent A. Smith, *The Early History of India*, New Delhi, 1989 (Reprint), p.216.
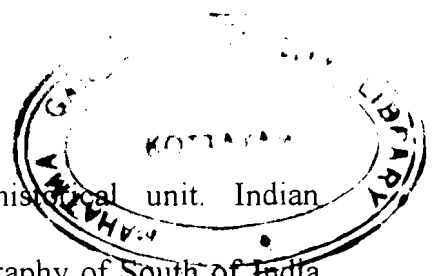
criteria for aggregating South India as a single historical unit. Indian historiography created the impression that "the historiography of South of India was an impossible task."[50] This self consciousness has been foundational in the historiography of south India.

Historiography of Far South and Formation of Cultural Identities

Thus historiography of the far south was in search of the cultural roots of the region. The pioneer scholars were curious to construct the past of the regions that reared them. The increased availability of inscriptions, texualisation of native traditions and indigenous forms of literature created the consciousness that not only South India and the far south are exclusive to each other in terms of language, culture and traditions but in the far south also there are two geographical, historical, cultural identities. These identities are historicised as Tamilakam and Keralam. They are historicised as exclusive to each other. Thus historiography of the far south which consisted of the historical texts on Tamilakam (Coromandal plains) and Keralam (Western coast) had their own characteristics. The social, cultural, political interpretations in the historical works of Tamilakam hardly have any correspondence with the social, cultural, political interpretations in the historical works of Keralam. Tamilakam and Keralam are defined by historians in their own way through integrating and interpreting different categories of sources. The definitions of Tamilakam and Keralam and their historicisation further resurface the problems of omission and partial representation. The historians of Tamilakam found that Tamilakam as a

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[50] K.V. Krishna Iyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, Madras, 1917, p.47.

definable unit is possible only if Kerala is excluded (see Map 3.2). Historians of Tamilakam equated far south with Tamilakam. The omission and partial representation of Keralam was necessary for the historians of Tamilakam to define the far south as a historiographic unit. Keralam was termed as the "western coast." It was designated as a single heterogeneous unit beyond Tamilakam. Geographical exclusion, language and culture are identified as the factors of differentiation. The people of the Malabar Coast are regarded as part of Tamilakam in the beginnings of Christian era. The West Coast is excluded from Tamilakam on the basis of later sources. "The Tamil who inhabited the western coast which were separated from the rest of the country by high mountains differed in their speech from the main body of the Tamils."[51] The languages of the West Coast such as Malayalam, Konkan and Canarese are regarded as altered forms of Tamil.[52] The historians carried out an extensive comparative study of these languages. They based the syntactical and semiotic analysis of the languages on the study of Tamil by Bishop Caldwell, Rhysdavids and Burnell. To a greater degree they attributed the differences in linguistic structure of Malayalam, Konkan and Canarese from Tamil to Aryanisation of the West Coast. Similarly they believed that the languages owed their differences in the structure and phonetics to the greater degree of influence of Sanskrit.[53] The same elements that are employed for the definition of south India as a historiographic unit in Indian historiography are employed in the definition of Tamilakam as a

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[51] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *South India and Her Muhammaden Invaders*, Madras, 1921, p.27.
[52] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil studies*, Madras, 1914, p.69.
[53] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *The Beginnings of South Indian History*, Madras, 1917, p.218. The same idea is presented by T.N. Subramanian, *History of Tamilnadu To 1565 AD*, Madras, 1914 and M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, The Tamil Studies, Madras, 1914.

historiographic unit. Southern India is defined as "the territorial kingdoms of the Pandyas, the Cholas and Viraballala III."[54] Keralam is excluded as "the West Coast of India which had trading contacts with the Mohammedan from early ages and that the region was unaffected by the invasions.[55] The West Coast excluding the Kongu country was defined as Malabar. It was regarded as the region which has been branched off from the Tamils in the historic period"[56] and as "the land colonised by the Brahmins from Hindustan and governed by an aristocracy of that caste.[57] The Cheralanadu extending from the southern Konkan over the entire coast is perceived as a part of the macro unit "Tamilakam," which had commercial relations with the Roman Empire in the early centuries of Christian era."[58] The historians were also aware that space in history has been subjected to definitions which were subjective. It was also realised that "several definitions appeared from time to time on the Deccan in which the narrow strip of land between the Western Ghats and the sea excluded."[59] Indian historiography considered the western coast as a "shatter zone."[60]

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[54] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *South India And Her Muhammaden Invaders*, Madras, 1921.

[55] *Op.cit.* p.21.

[56] K.V. Subramania Iyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient* Dekhan, Madras, 1917, p.24.

[57] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.251.

[58] V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1904, p.12.

[59] R.K. Bhandarkar, *Early History of the Dekhan Down To the Mahomedan Conquest*, Bombay, 1895, p.7.

[60] This term is borrowed from Bernad S. Cohn. He points out the theoretical and methodological issues in the study of Indian society. By shatter zones he designates these areas which are excluded from the orbit of historical spaces because "they are found to be regions where people pass either in military or peaceful invasion with no persistent political tradition." He refers to Malwa and Malabar as such regions in the history of India. This characterisation is regarded as one of the limitations of Indian historiography. For further details see Bernard S. Cohn. "Regions subjective and objective, their relation to the study of modern Indian history and society" in Thomas R. Metalf (ed.) *Modern India*, New Delhi, 1990, p.109, 137.

Thus Keralam was projected as a unit distinct from the south of India which is equated with the Tamil speaking area. Geographically, it is designated as the "Coromandal plains extending from Venkatagiri hills to Cape Comerin"[61] (see Map 3.3).

The distinction between Tamilakam and Keralam is justified by many arguments. The historiographic exclusion of the west coast (Kerala) is thus expressed "though this region is included in Tamil Anthologies and pattatipattu one of the reasons for the exclusion of western regions has been its geographical isolation from the interior regions of Tamilakam."[62] Kerala is regarded not only as a distinct geographical unit but also as a different political/cultural unit. This is attributed to the geographical isolation of Keralam from Coromandal regions. The historians of Tamilakam asserted that the decline of the Chera dynasty marked the beginnings of different political identity of Keralam. The historians of Keralam appropriate this reason in the historical explanations on the origin of the kingdoms of Travancore, Cochin and Calicut.[63] "Tamilakam and Keralam are very clearly distinguished in terms of Aryanisation. Malayalam is a highly developed dialect of Tamil and Sanskrit. The growth of Malayalam and peculiar socio-economic practices are obscure due to little archaeological work in Kerala."[64] In the historiography of India the regions of Tamilakam and Keralam

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[61] R.K. Bhandarkar, *Lectures on the Ancient History of India on the Period from 650 to 325 B.C.*, Bombay, 1919, p.2.

[62] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.59.

[63] The origin of Travancore as a political unit is traced to "the dismemberment of the Chera dynasty. The Chera dynasty was constantly engaged in warfare with its neighbour, Pandya and Chola till central Chera was overrun by the Konga rajahs, the original dynasty of the Cheras migrated to its southern possessions and joined the family residing in the south." P. Shungoonny Menon. *History of Travancore From the Earliest Times*, New Delhi, 1985 (Reprint), p.31.

[64] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.210.

constituted the entity of 'Far South'; but these historiographic reflections of southern India reveal that the indigenous historians regarded Tamilakam and Keralam as two historical units. So they considered Tamilakam and Keralam as two historiographic units. On the basis of Sangam literature Malanadu was regarded as a part of ancient Tamilakam. Later on the Keralam was historicised as a distinct historiographic unit. Thus the notion of total and part characterise this historiographic non-unity.

The historicisation of Tamilakam and Keralam as exclusive units thus became self-evidently necessary. The nature of sources, interpretations of historians, the themes and assumptions are the key elements in the formation of these cultural identities. The concepts employed in the historiography of India (Aryanisation, Dravidianism and civilisation) are appropriated in the formulation of historiographic identities of Tamilakam and Keralam. The primary factor that conditioned the construction of Kerala and Tamilakam was the 'Aryan myth.' In the historiography of Keralam and Tamilakam the dichotomy of Aryan><Dravidian races took a new resonance. The historical interpretations of the Aryan myth by the historians of Keralam and Tamilakam are polemic.

Tamilakam and Aryan Myth

Historians of Tamilakam and Keralam adopted the historiographic model of Aryans and non-Aryans in Indian historiography. They proceeded from the assumption of William Jones that a linguistically defined race of Aryans from

Europe implanted in India the *Varna* system.[65] William Jones reaffirmed the 'all important Aryan conquest myth'[66] which was the basis of later ethnological and historical explanations of India.

The historians of Tamilakam interrogate the dominant assumptions on the civilising role of Aryans in India. This is accomplished by re-examining the sources from which such assumptions were derived. In the pioneer texts that interpreted ancient Indian civilisation to the Western readers, Aryan civilisation was axiomatic. Sanskrit literature being the source, attempts were made to historicise South India and south of India in accordance with the contents of these traditional narratives. The Indo-Gangetic region as far as Benaras and North are identified as the land of the Indo-Aryan World while South Bihar, Malwa, a portion of the Deccan and the regions to the South of the Rajaputana desert are regarded "as lands unknown, uncivilised and not yet hinduised."[67] The story of Bhima in *Aitareya Brabmana* speaks of Dandakaranya (South of the Vindhyas) as the land of aborigines.[68] The only exception was the region between Godavari and Krishna which was regarded as the kingdom of the Andhras colonised by the Aryans.[69] Thus the extensive territory extending from Dandakaranya to Setu was not the only region of non-Aryan people.

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[65] A.V. William Jackson, (ed.) *History of India*, New Delhi, 1987 (Reprint) p.124.

[66] This term is derived from Gilbert Slater. He criticised this as obliterating the equally significant Dravidian elements in the formation of Indian culture. "This all important Aryan myth initiated by Maxmuller is popularised by the Indians who cling to this theory that they are Aryans and that their religion and culture are that of Aryans. They are proud of their affinities with the Indo-European language speaking groups" Gilbert Slater, *The Dravidian Elements In Indian Culture*, London, 1924, p.26.

[67] A.V. William Jackson, (ed.) *History of India*, New Delhi, 1987 (Reprint), p.200.

[68] P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils from the Earliest Times to 600 AD*, Madras, 1928, p.21.

[69] K.V. Subramania Iyer, *Historical Sketches Ancient Dekhan*, Madras, 1917, p.231.

The territories of Gujarat, Orissa and Bengal are regarded as "the land of non-Aryan demon worshippers."[70] The paradigms of Dravidian race and Dravidian culture which were employed by Indologists, British historians and the native English educated historians to represent south of India are re-examined and reinterpreted. The historians of Tamilakam regarded the *itihasa* - purana tradition as insufficient to analyse the contributions of Dravidians to Indian culture. So the 'great Aryan myth' is criticised as biased and ahistorical.[71] The historians of Tamilakam considered that the indigenous literature was the true source for the reconstruction of past in the south of India.[72] Geographically southern India is regarded as the region least disturbed by foreign invasion due to the geographical barriers. The composite and complex culture of the contemporary society is attributed to acculturation that took place only at a later age. Some of the concepts such as antiquity, continuity, civilisation that we identify in the context of Aryan culture in Indian historiography are present in the counter historicisation of Tamilakam also. The counter historicisation by the historians of Tamilakam intends to elevate southern India from the position of its secondary place in the historiography of India. At the same time south of India (equated with Tamilakam) is recognised as a part of the totality of India. Methodologically the notion of totality and part in historicisation was treated as unproblematic.

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[70]   R.C. Dutt, *The Ancient History of India*, Calcutta, 1888, p.210.
[71]   "The Dravidians were sufficiently civilised at this stage and the Brahmins felt no necessity to bring with them neither the Kshatriyas nor the Vaisyas to civilise the south," M.Srinivasa Iyengar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.59.
[72]   The historians of Tamilakam were proud of the vast corpus of literature. They believed that by eliminating inconsistencies they can derive history. "The Sanskrit literature as a whole will not bear a comparison with Tamil literature." M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.127. The traditions of Agastya as the father of Tamil language and literature assigning him vedic origin are pointed out to prove the antiquity of Tamil.

The counter historicisation by the historians of Tamilakam is different from the counter historicisation visible in Indian historiography. While historicisation of India germinated from eurocentric history the counter historicisation of Tamilakam germinated from inside. The 'other' is the Sanskrit culture. It is revealed that Sanskrit culture obliterated the regional identities in India. The historians of Tamilakam were eager to find out the roots of their own culture. This resulted in counter historicisation.

Dravidianism and Tamilakam as counter history

Following the model of Indian historiography, the historians of the far south proceed from the assumption that the people of south of India are essentially Dravidians. So Tamil culture is equated with Dravidian culture. The questions, such as, who are the Dravidians and what are the elements in Dravidian culture are axiomatic in the mapping of Tamilakam. Certain presuppositions that characterise the study of race were reiterated in the mapping of Tamilakam also. One presupposition was that the traits of higher culture were inherent to the superior race. The inferior races are civilised by superior races. Thus the historiography of the South identifies the presence of different racial elements in ancient Tamilakam. These are historicised in the hierarchical order. The Negritos, the Proto-Austroloids and the Mangoloids are recognised as the racial elements in the Proto-history of Tamilakam and Keralam. The Dravidians who superseded these groups due to their superior qualities of culture are identified as the dominant racial element in Tamilakam. Thus Dravidian culture is identified as the civilisation of Tamilakam in the

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Pre-historic period.[73] "This part of India ever since the original migration of man has been the home and centre of the Dravidian life and culturè, and possess the richest materials, archaeological, sociological, linguistic and literary."[74] The Dravidians are regarded as yet another branch of the Aryans who were an outcaste.[75] The historians shared the speculation that the basic characteristics of Dravidian culture survived though there was intermingling of Dravidian race with other primitive races in Tamilakam.[76] The culture of Tamilakam before the coming of Aryans is defined as the Dravidian culture. Religious practices, languages, physical characteristics and social structure are illustrated as evidences for this definition.[77] The Dravidians are regarded as "superior in elements of culture which make for the wealth and civilisation"[78] in contrast to "the Aryans – relatively barbarous invaders with an immense advantage for right and concerted action made possible by horses."[79] There were speculations on the maritime trade of the ancient Tamils. The trade relations of Tamilakam with the middleeast propounded by the diffusionist school of anthropology and

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[73] "Literary conventions especially of the early unsophisticated stages of literature which existed long before the rise of the much later artificial poetry of Sanskrit was based on the actual customs and manners of the people." P.T. Srinivasa Aẏyangar, *History of the Tamil From The Earliest Times to 600 AD*, Madras, 1928, p.63.

[74] K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, *The Chronology of The Early Tamils*, Madras, 1932, p.3.

[75] "The outcaste went to South because the Vindhyas was the southern boundary of the holy land of Arya Varta and he who berift of the Aryarites had necessarily to go to south." M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1917, p.4.

[76] It was assumed that the sangam literature revealed Dravidian culture as the dominant culture though there existed primitive races in Tamilakam. Quoting a poem from *purananuru* which spoke of (s. 140) the king Nalli as the patron of music a historian asks "if any other race at so early a time could take the art of music to so high." K.N. Sivarajapillai, *The Chronology of the Tamils*, Madras, 1932, p.107.

[77] "Study of Dravidian culture had no received any attention. First and foremost duty of the Dravidian section of the oriental research institute is to see if there are things ethnic linguistic, or cultural that may be categorised under the distinct label of Dravidian." *Op.cit.* p.108.

[78] K. N. Sivaraja Pillai, *The chronology of the Tamils*, Madras 1932, p. 118

[79] Gilbert Slater, *Dravidian Elements in Indian culture*, London, 1924 p. 52

archaeology were historicised. In such speculations South India was regarded as the terminus of the movement.[80]

The historians of Tamilakam through Lemurian theory justified this. Though this theory was a speculation of the diffusionist school of anthropology the historians preferred to assume that migrations from some part of the Mediterranean through Baluchistan to India and South India took place before the dawn of the Sumerian civilisation. Historians pointed out the similarities in language, religion and cultural practices as evidences. South India is also compared with other regions in India, which were labelled as non-Aryan. Thus Dravidian land is conceived rather as a macro unit consisting of different regions in the north west India and the southern India. The identification of a coherent unit also necessitates the evidences for the logical conclusion that the region had independent status in terms of political power so as not to allow further acculturation. The Tamil heroic literature is defined as the works composed long anterior to their first contact with the Aryans.[81] By combining indigenous literary works and Asokan edicts the historians illustrated that since the term Tamils is absent it indicates that Tamilakam was not a part of the Mauryan Empire. When the historians characterise the society of far south as Dravidians/Tamils the sources they employed, and the strategies they used, reveal that their ideas on Tamilness/Dravidians were rather derived from medieval literature and inner social situations. It is based on the self perception of Brahmins and Dravidians (non-Brahmins) who are identified as the Tamils. "Broadly speaking the brahmins and the Sudras of the Tamil country belong to a distinct race. In a way each had its own system of thought, religion and ethical and social rules so that

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[80] *Op.cit.* p. 124.
[81] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil studies,* Madras, 1914, p. 195

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an attempt to engraft the one on the other might look strange preposterous. This fact has been grasped by the English educated portion of the non-brahmin caste who endeavour to assert an indigenous Dravidian civilisation. This is only natural and they merit the support and sympathy of the scholars if they confine themselves to a rational scientific enquiry."[82] The medieval Saiva and Vaishnava movements were the major themes in the historiography of far south. They become themes of historical investigation, because they were indigenous movements that assert 'Tamilness.' The Saiva and Vaishnava literature were composed in Tamil. The sanctity of Tamil was prioritised over Sanskrit. The *Saiva siddhanta* literature interrogated the social privileges of *Antanar* (brahmins). It went a step further and excluded the Brahmins from Tamil identity.[83] The terms *parppan* in the Tamil heroic poems, marayoor/*Antanar/ariyar* in medieval literature were used to designate the Aryan groups in Tamilakam. It was assumed that the Aryans maintained purity of lineage through strict social rules.[84] There were writers who believed that these different groups who claimed Aryan descent were new groups with admixture of dominant tribal groups.[85] They adopted Vedic profession that assigned them a high status in the hierarchy of caste in Southern India. Thus purity of Aryan race

[82] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *The beginnings of South Indian History*, Madras, 1917 P 24

[83] Dagmar Hellmann–Rajanayagam, "Is there Tamil Race?" in Peter Robb (ed.), *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Madras, 1995, pp. 109-145.

[84] Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, proceeded on this assumption and pointed out that the existence of *marumakkattayam* in Kerala was the result of the exclusion and hegemony of the Nambudiris on the land. He designates all non-Aryan groups as sudra-s/dravidians. Tamil is regarded as the language of all groups in the far south. Tamil used by Ariyar is regarded as Arya Tamil, and Tamil used in Malanadu is designated as Malanadu Tamil. Elamkulam P. M. Kunjan Pillai, *Some problems in Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1955, pp. 14-17.

[85] T.H.P. Chentharassery, *Elamkulavum Kerala Charithravum*, Trivandrum, 1988, p.224 and also see E.M. Sankaran Namboothirapad, *Keralam Malayalikalute Matrubhumi*, Part I, Thiruvananthapuram, 1947, pp. 40-44.

is demystified through historical explanations of caste in the Southern India. Thus race is displaced by caste.[86]

The non-brahmin castes in Tamilakam were regarded as a large category. It was found out that the non-Brahmin castes in Tamilakam consisted of Telugu, Marattas and Chalukyas who came as migrants and became occupational groups.[87] Thus the Tamils historicised by the historians as *Tiravitar* was a unified category as it included all non-brahmin castes.[88] The essential similarities among the caste groups and equality among Dravidians were interpreted from *Saiva Siddhanta* literature.[89] *Saiva Siddhanta* literature reveals fear and resentment of the brahmins. The brahmins are now seen as outsiders of Aryan oppression in the south and as not belonging to the soil.[90] Dravidian had always been a linguistic and geographical term in traditional narratives until Europeans defined it as a race. The historians of Tamilakam combined race and caste as a single system and defined it in their own way. The Tamils are perceived as non-Brahmin caste (*sudracāti*).[91]

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[86] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p. 212

[87] *Op.cit.* p.217.

[88] Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "Is there Tamil Race?" in Peter.Robb (ed). *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Madras, 1995, pp. 109-145.

[89] *Op.cit.* p.129.

[90] Such assumptions were foundational to consciousness of Tamil identity. Literary men such as Damodaran Pillai, Sundaram Pillai, Vaiyapuri Pillai and Kanthaiya Pillai projected Dravidianess as the models of civilization and virtue. The Vellalars were placed at the apex of Dravidian culture in Tamilakam. These ideas appeared in journals such as *Chenthamil* (1922), *Tamil moli* (1925); *Tamil* (1925) *Tamil Tāi* (1935) and *Tamil Selvan* (1892).

[91] The Dravidian movement of E. V. Ramasami Naicker rejected the idea of Tamils as *Sudracati*. He asserted that the Aryans had racially and not culturally subjugated the Dravidians. He rather regarded the equation of Dravidians with Sudra as a nefarious Aryan scheme to humiliate the southerners. He defined Tamils as "those born in Tamilnadu and Tamil speaking." *Anaimuttu Periyarin Vera Cintanaikal*, Trichy, 1974, pp. 226-240.

Aryan Myth and Historiography of Keralam

If the historiography of Tamilakam focussed on the concept of *Tiravitar*

the colonial historiography of Keralam rejected their Dravidian overtures. They

depicted this by pointing out that Tamil was the original and oldest language.

The admixture of Sanskrit in Malayalam and the evolution of Malayalam is

pointed out as the evidence for racial distinctiveness of the people of Keralam

from that of Tamilakam. The historiography of Keralam defined the brahmin

communities in Keralam as Aryan and therefore regarded them as superior.[92]

This is evident in the genealogical descriptions of the rulers of Cochin,

Travancore and Calicut. The dominant assumption of historians was that the

rulers of these kingdoms were *kshatriya*-s. The traditional narratives were the

chief sources that were illustrated to back up this *kshatriya* status. There were

even discussions on the genealogies of these rulers.[93]

The interpretations of the historians of Keralam being based on

traditional narrative accounts, historicise the hierarchical social order of Kerala

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[92] Historians attempted to place all non-brahmin communities in Keralam through the degree of pollution to the brahmin communities in Kerala. Caste and ethnicity were synonyms. For further details on the social system of Kerala see K. P. Padmanaba Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol. III, Madras, 1935. The historical texts which appeared in post independent era corrected the Aryan myth through new evidences and interpretations- Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *Some Problems in Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1955, K. N. Ganesh. *Kerathinte Innalekal*, Trivandrum, 1982 and also see T. H. P. Chentharassery, *Elamkulavum Keralacharithravum*, Trivandrum, 1988.

[93] To cite an example "Travancore royal family maintains a high degree of purity in its marriage relations than does the Cochin Rajah and in the social scale the Travancore royal family may be considered better kshatriya-s that those in the north." P. Shungoony Menon, *History of Travancore From the Earliest Times to 1867 A.D.*, Trivandrum, 1878, p.57. Pacchu Moothathu the pioneer historian of Keralam traces the kshatriya status of the Travancore royal family through traditional narratives. Pacchu Moothathu, *Thiruvithamcore Charithram*, Trivandrum, 1867. In contrary to this the historians of post independent India assert an indigeneous origin of royal families. They criticised the early historiography of Kerala as the historiography within the paradigm of *vamsamahatmya* of rulers. For further details see T.H.P. Chentharassery, *Elamkulavum Kerala Charithravum*, Trivandrum, 1988 and also see K.P. Ganesan, *Keralathente Innalekal*, Trivandrum, 1982.

in accordance with the descriptions of these traditional narratives.[94] The rulers

and the elite are regarded as having strong affinities with the Aryans.

Tamil Identity

The historians had to name the society they were historicising. They

applied the term Tamils to define coromandal regions which they equated with

the South of India. The historians characterised Tamils in their own terms by

integrating indigenous literature with various categories of sources drawn from

linguistics, anthropology, sociology and political theories.

The historians proceeded with the assumption that the indigenous

literature revealed Tamil identity.[95] They believed that this Tamil identity existed

from antiquity. Hence Tamilakam and Tamil identity are as the major themes

visible in the colonial historiography of Tamilakam. *The Dravidian Elements in*

Indian Culture presented many speculations that inspired historians of far south.

Gilbert Slater regarded Tamil as the ancient Dravidian language that extended

over the vast regions of Ceylon, Burma, Malaysia and Assam. Thus he regarded

Tamil as "the language spoken by the majority in South Asia."[96] The richness of

vocabulary, subtlity, sense of logic are regarded as the evidences for the antiquity

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[94] Though K.P. Padmanaba Menon attempts to explain the caste system in Keralam by integrating traditional narratives with the studies on caste by western scholars, he assumed that the lower castes were tribals. So they were non-Aryans and hence an inferior category. K.P. Padmanaba Menon, *History of Kerala*, Ernakulam, 1986 (Reprint).

[95] "The question of who was a Tamil or what is Tamilakam is never mentioned in the Sangam literature. Inam was the term used for bringing out the differences. The traditional literature had no need to define the groups because it was self evident who and what was a Tamil or who they were or whom they sang for?" For further discussion see Dagmartiellmann-Rajanayagam. "Is There A Tamil Race?" in Peter Robb (ed.), *The Concept of race in South Asia*, Madras, 1995, pp. 102-115.

[96] Gilbert Slater, *The Dravidian Elements in Indian Culture*, London, 1924, p.20.

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of Tamil. "Civilization brings with it new ideas and thoughts which require new words coined."[97] Language as basis of distinction is visible in the traditional literature of India. The traditional Sanskrit literature refers to 'anasa' which in Sanskrit conveys unintelligible tongue.[98] The historians reiterate different traditions that speak of Agastya and Lord Siva as the creators of Tamil, as historical explanations for the antiquity of the language. Tamil is illustrated as the language that transcends over time. *Tolkappiyam* and *Iraiyanaragapporul* the two works on Tamil grammar are assigned to Lord Siva. The tradition of Siva as creator of these texts is regarded as evidences for the independent growth and development of Tamil from the beginnings of the world. Through this the sanctity of Tamil was postulated and this language was prioritised over Sanskrit.[99]

Sound or language is regarded as the very basic feature of distinction "language is a feature that pervades Tamil society and Tamil culture indeed all aspects of Tamil life in a way which has no equivalent in most other cultures.[100] Tamil is prioritised as purest Dravidian language in tenmozhi (languages

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[97] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p. 146.
[98] Romila Thaper, *Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 114.
[99] The presence of Idukkuri words in Tamil is point out as evidence of the antiquity of Tamil language in literature. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Pre-Aryan Tamil Culture*, Madras, 1985 (Reprint), p. 19. The study of Tamil language by Bishop Caldwell was analysed by Prof. R. E. Asher. He stated that Caldwell's study was based on (a) affiliations to any group (b) comparisons of philology and grammar of individual Dravidian language, (c) typological and morphological forms. For further details see Prof. R. E. Asher, "Tamil and Typology." In Nagaswaray (ed.), *Prof. V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar Studies in South Indian History and Culture*, Chennai, 1997, pp. 240-249.
[100] Zevelebil, *The Companion Studies*, London, 1973, p. 17

spoken in the South). Tamil is regarded as one of the 500 principal languages spoken in the face of the globe at present.[101]

Tamil is contrasted with Vadamzhi-the languages spoken by people in the north. The Tamil scholars such as Poornalingam Pillai, Vaiyapuri Pillai, Sundaram Pillai initiated the method of employing language (Tamil) as the basis of Tamil identity. The publication of Tamil lexicon and compilation of dictionaries introduced uniformity in language. Standardisation and compilation of numerous dialects that existed in the coromandal plains accomplished it. The historians historicised this language through the concepts of *muttamil* (The three kings-the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas are historicised as the *muttamil ventar*). The society of five landscapes (*Tinai*) and the seven chieftancies are historicised as the evidences of Tamil identity.[102]

Local Traditions as Foundational to Tamil Identity

The assumptions on the continuity of Tamil culture from time immemorial and its prevalence throughout the entire region of Tamilakam is foundational to the recognition of Tamilakam as a homogeneous unit.[103] Language, geographical category of *Tinai*, literature, spiritual traditions, trade, Dravidian kinship, social and political traditions are the "cultural corollaries

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[101] M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p. 149. "The genius of Tamil is marked by concrete ideas and images in contrast to the philosophical temperament which characterise Sanskrit." P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Pre-Aryan Tamil Culture*, New Delhi, 1985 (Reprint), p. 49.

[102] From a careful study of ancient Tamil poems I am led to think that some of the earliest works were composed undoubtedly more than 2000 years ago and that the Tamil people acquired wealth and civilisation at these early period." V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred years Ago*, Madras 1904, p.3.

[103] *Op.cit.* p.14.

which are visible in colonial historiographic identity."[104] The historical

interpretations of Tamil identity (Tamil culture) are derived of religious literature

of the medieval period and the literary works of Tamil scholars of early

nineteenth century.[105] The Tamil essays by Pandit R. Raghava Aiyengar the

editor of *Sen Tamil* popularised the notion of integrity of Tamil culture. The

commentaries on Avvaiyar by Mr. S. Anantavinayagam Pillai and the Saiva

commentaries by Arumuganavalar, the critical studies on religious literature, the

writings of Samasundara Desikar and the commentaries on Tamil anthologies by

U.V. Swaminatha Iyer popularised the notions of antiquity and continuity of

Tamil culture which were historicised as Tamil identity. These Tamil scholars

eliminated the inconsistencies in traditional narratives and paraphrased the

contents as information on Tamil culture (Tamil identity). The historians of

Tamilakam translated them into history through historical methods which each

scholar considered as appropriate. There were attempts to provide chronological

framework to traditional literary works. "The facts of ancient Tamil history

enshrined in early poems and set in a highly artificial grouping were not quarried

systematically nor sifted nor arranged chronologically so as to enable us to get a

clear, intelligible account of a past not much forgotten."[106] There were also

attempts to carve out Tamil identity through integration of scattered information

of traditional narratives with the official literature on Tamilakam. Thus the role

of Tamil literature is evoking the domain of Tamil culture cannot be neglected.

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[104] A. K. Ramanujan identified certain motifs in Tamil literature as constituting the identity of the
Tamils. For further details see A. K. Ramanujan, "The Interior Landscape and poems of Love
and War." Delhi, 1985, pp. 43-47.
[105] *Op.cit.* p.52.
[106] K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, *The Chronology of the Early Tamils*, Madras, 1932, p.191.

"Contemporary literature and traditions as transmitted in literary records supply us with materials with which we have to construct history."[107]

The *Saiva Sidhanta* literature (14th to 16th centuries) also played a major role in defining Tamil identity. One dominant assumption of this literature was that the Tamils are non-Brahmins and they are categorised as *Tiravitar*. The *Saiva sidhanta* literature manifested the increasing importance of agriculture. As a part of the British Indian empire the region of Tamilakam was considered as a unit of economy. The British Empire designed it as a part of the political, economic strategy in capital accumulation. When the British gained control over the empire, both they and the groups engaged in cultivation tried to establish some sort of stability of agricultural revenue. The agricultural landlords of Tamilakam designated as Vellalas were prioritised over other groups by many local traditions. Generosity and honesty were regarded as the special attributes of these agricultural landlords. Popular Tamil writers such as Ramalinga Swamikal, Maraimalai Adigal (Sanga Cheyyul) and many other writers praised these agricultural lands. "The word Velanmai became a synonym for charity and this in turn became a synonym for the instruments of productive cultivation."[108]

The Saiva Siddhanta literature of 15th and 16th centuries illustrated the evils of

[107] R. Sathiyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, Madras, 1924, p.259. This increased significance attached to the production of local knowledge encourages the mapping and constitution of a social space. It is also a way of rejecting the ideological dependency on the culture defined as 'higher.' Lee M. Raymond illustrates this in the context of The Third World in the modern age. For further details see Lee. M. Raymond, "Modernity And Post-modernity In The Third World" in *Current Sociology*, Vol. 42, No.2, 1994, pp.42-45.

[108] Eugene F. Irschick, challenges the attitude that knowledge about colonial culture is the product of only the west. it is regarded as the intricate cross pollination of European and native ideas. He states that "the notion of permanent space associated with the British revenue system was largely responsible for the notion of Tamilakam and Tamil identity." For the relevant discussion on the role of British revenue administration in different regions of South India. See Engene F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History Constructing South India*, California, 1994, pp.198-201.

the society and the social privileges of pappan (Aarriyar) and popularised the idea that Brahmins and Thiravitar (commons) were two monolithic categories in Tamilakam. Historians of Tamilakam such as V. Kanakasabhai, T.N. Subramanian, K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar rejected the civilising role of Aryan culture in Tamilakam. They rather regarded Aryanisation as that which corrupted the original Tamil culture. "The fallacy of reasoning with which some read the influence of Aryan culture in every walk of life in the South is deplorable. The evidences for them is the existing Sanskrit and Prakrit words in literature."[109] "Nowadays it has become a fashion to trace anything great in the south to Maghada. This at least in the case of linguistic studies in the south is to be discarded."[110] But scholars like V.N. Ramachandra Dikshitar, Dr. S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar and K.A. Nilakantasastri recognise Aryanisation as one of the trajectories which enriched Tamil culture. It is remarked "the English educated non-brahmin castes endeavour to assert an indigenous Dravidian civilisation. This is only natural and they merit the sympathy of scholars and they confine themselves to a rational enquiry.[111] The explanations of Tamil culture are also based on the differences between Tamilakam and the neighbouring regions. "The Tamils who inhabited the West Coast were separated from the rest of the country by high mountains in their speech from the main body of the Tamils."[112] *Arram* and *Veeram* are regarded as the special attributes of Tamil culture. This is illustrated through descriptions of political traditions in narratives. Thus Dravidian culture equated with Tamil culture. It is prioritised

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[109] K.N. Sivarajapillai, *The Chronology of the Early Tamils*, Madras, 1932, p.212.
[110] K.V. Subramania Iyer. *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, Madras, 1917, p.62.
[111] M.Srinivasa Aiyangar. *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.51.
[112] V. Kanakasabhai. *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1904, p.235.

over Aryan culture which is regarded as "highly philosophical and religious."[113]

The notion of Dravidian identity with its peculiar attributes is kept alive in

historiography of Tamilakam in modern times also.[114] Thus in the historicisation

of Tamil culture the Aryan culture was always the framework of reference.

The local traditions also created the consciousness a cultural space for the

Tamils[115] socio-religious practices, kinship, taboo, incest, ecology, trading

pursuits are all appropriated as the factors of after cultural integration of

the Tamils.

Along with the identification of elements of Tamil culture there is also the

search for spatial and temporal continuities. "Tamilakam is the land of antiquity

as it has well developed language and literature from very early times.

Civilisation brings with it new ideas and thoughts which require new words

coined"[116] continuity of Tamil culture is thus asserted. "In the light of the

evidence left in early Sanskrit writings like the *Ramayana* of *Valmiki* there can

be no doubt that the early Dravidian peoples of South India had attained a fairly

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[113] P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils From the Earliest Times to 600 AD*, Madras, 1928, p.63. Essentialism, theory of conquest, anthropological approach, ethnological approach was the different methods employed to study race. The ethnological approach, which combined physique and culture, became dominant in the 19th century. To cite an example Michael Banton, *Racial Theories*, New York, 1986, pp.13-32.

[114] To cite an example, Sadhasivan, "Genesis of Dravidian Movement," *South Indian History Congress Souvenir*, Madurai, 1987, pp.161-163.

[115] Economic and ecological determinism are regarded as the essential elements in culture. For details see Ernest Cassirer, "The genesis of cultural Diversity" in Graham Clark (ed) *The Identity of Man*, London, 1983, p.68. There is a view that questions the methodology of employing culture as a criterion for social space.

"If culture has been self consciously used as an instrument of integration it is neither the sole condition nor a sufficient condition. It may not even be a necessary condition" Michael Schreder, "Culture and the Integration of Societies" in *International Social Science Journal*, no.139, Feb. 1994, p.64.

[116] M.Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p.146.

high degree of civilisation and culture."[117] "The Tamils were the most cultured people of India before the age of the *rishis*. It is proposed here to investigate the culture which the ancient Tamils attained in South India before the Gorgeous fire-cult spread from the valleys of the Sindhu and the Ganga."[118]

Identifying Tamilakam through Political Definitions

While in one strand of historiography the coherence of Tamilakam in terms of culture is asserted, another strand of historiography asserted the antiquity of Dravidian political/traditions in Tamilakam. This was accomplished through political definitions of Tamilakam. After the model of Indian historiography the historians of Tamilakam appropriated political history as the normative framework. The exemptions were *Economic Conditions in South India (1000 - 1500 AD)*, (A. Appadourai, 1936) and *Ananda Ranga Pillai: The Pepys of French India*, (Srinivasaachari C.S., 1940). On the model of Indian historiography which projected Empires and kingdoms to historicise coherence of India, historiography of Tamilakam was also in search of Kingdoms and Empires to attain the unifying totality. The sources employed for the representation of past in the far south belonged to the category which facilitated the writing of political history. Historiography of the far south appropriated the political history of India as the model. The dominant assumption in historiography that "political history can be the whole history of any country"[119]

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[117] Ramachandra Dikshitar, "South Indian customs in the *Smrti*-s" in *Indian Culture*, Vol. no. 5, Calcutta, 1938-39, pp. 2-7.

[118] P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Pre-Aryan Tamil Culture*, New Delhi, 1985 (Reprint), p.4.

[119] Sir. Alfred Lyall, *The Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India*, London, 1919, p.8.

was appropriated in south India also. Copper plate inscriptions, official records, epigraphs of temples of Chidambaram, Tanjore, Vaikuntaperumal inscriptions are employed by the historians of Tamilakam to construct the dynastic histories. Such political definitions were preoccupied with the search for historical continuities. Historical continuity is projected as a reality of the past by interpreting the vast corpus of indigenous literature, temple inscriptions and other Western sources of historical knowledge. The existence of monarchy from antiquity is fabricated from the Tamil Anthologies and other local traditions "even from very early ages Tamilakam is a land of Muvander and seven chieftancies . . . a kingdom or state is the necessary condition for the conduct of human life."[120] The temple inscriptions, epigraphs, are meticulously studied to identify kingdoms and Empires. The traditional narratives are integrated with later 'documents.' It was interpreted that "the civil wars illustrated between Nallingilli and his rival Nedungilli which was a favourite theme of purananuru states that all these early chola chieftains established a sort of vague hegemony among the Tamil states."[121] Discontinuities are historicised as the interregnum between the disintegration of a state and the beginnings of another. So collateral branches of a ruling dynasty constitute a major theme in the historiography of Tamilakam.

The Muhammadan invasions of South of India initiated by Alauddin Khilji and carried forward by rulers of Tughlk dynasty is regarded as

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[120] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Evolution of Hindu Administrative Institutions in South India*, Madras, 1931, p.55
[121] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*, Madras, 1935, p.30.

"unenduring." In this context Tamilakam is contrasted with the West Coast "Muhammaden intercourse with this part of India seems to have begun much earlier and have considerable evidence of the pre-musalman trade of the Arabs of the people with it."[122] Tamilakam is identified as the land of kingdom which dictated terms of maritime trade from the early centuries of christian era.

In the search for historical continuities some of the patterns visible in Indian historiography were appropriated as the model. It is asserted "South India both by its rich prehistoric past and by its existing social structure and political traditions forms the most characteristic if not the only source of real information or Dravidian history past and present."[123] The historiography of Tamilakam politically defined the land through the categories of chiefdoms, kingdoms and feudatories. The historians of Tamilakam ventured over grand schemes of past. *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago* (Kanakasabhai, 1904) narrated the political history of Tamilakam from 50 A.D. to 300 A.D. *The Tamil Studies* (M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, 1914)) narrated the origin and development of Tamil culture *History of Tamilnadu to 1564 A. D.* (T.N. Subramanian, 1914) analysed the political and cultural history of Tamilakam from the beginnings to the 16th century. It is primarily a political history of Tamilakam and hence the various dynasties–the Cholas, Cheras, Pandyas, Pallavas and Kakatiyas are the major themes to be found in this text. *The Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan* (K.V. Subramania Iyer, 1917) analysed the role of the Pallavas the Cholas, the Pandyas and the Kakatiyas in the south of India. *The Beginnings of South Indian History*

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[122] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *South India and Her Muhammaden Invaders*, New Delhi, 1921, p.124.
[123] For the relevant discussion see K.N. Sivarajapillai, *The chronology of the Early Tamils*, Madras, 1932, p.120.

(S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, 1918) *Dravidian India* (T.R. Shesha Iyer, 1925)

Pre Aryan Culture (P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar: 1931) narrated the history of

Tamilakam from the prehistoric ages. Regional dynastic histories by Prof. K.A.

Nilakanta Sastri, Prof. C. Minakshi, K.G. Shesha Iyer, K.V. Krishna Iyer,

Prof. T.V. Sadasiva Pandarathar, Prof. Sathianatha Aiyar, and Venkata

Ramanayya are texts which analysed the history of centuries. Such mega history

was rendered possible because of the conviction that history as the scientific

knowledge of the past has epistemological status and social significance.[124] It is

regarded as the basic necessity of any nation. These historical texts the historians

focused on "the historically constituted locations of the past."[125] Tamilakam is

projected as the "land of seven chieftancies and three kingdoms."[126]

The geographical extent of the kingdoms (the Cheras, Cholas and

Pandyas) are articulated through the references to regions in traditional literature,

epigraphs and the western sources such as survey reports, manual of Madras

Presidency etc.[127] The political definitions of Tamilakam are also embedded in

the notions of Tamils and non-Tamils. The Cheras, Cholas and the Pandyas are

identified as the original ruling dynasties of Tamilakam. "The tribes Maravar,

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[124] This conviction was dominant in the historiographic reflections of colonial ages. "History has played a key role in the modern production of a nation state and of the various constituent bases of nationality. At the same time the nation has played a critical historical role in defining what a modern conception of state should be." Dirks, *History A Sign of The Modern In Public Culture* New York, Vol. 2 No.2. Spring, 1990, p.44-48

[125] This term is borrowed from Aloka Parasher. She illustrates that how centre-versus, margin playa key rule in the Pre-modern representation of past. She states that this trend is continued by the modern writings of history. For further discussions on this trend see. Aloka Parasher, *Absences in History*. Symposium papers 3, India History Congress, Warrangal, 1992.

[126] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *The Evolution of Hindu Administrative Institutions In South India*, Madras, 1931, p.72.

[127] In the compilations of epigraphs, an account of political history was usually presented. To cite a few examples Robert Sewell, *The Historical Inscriptions of South India Till 1923 And Outlines of Political History*, Madras, 1932, pp. 214-261. *A Topographical List of the Inscriptions of Madras Presidency Till 1915*, 3 vols, Madras, 1917, pp. 171-175, pp.297-302 and also see Colin Mackenzie *Descriptive catalogue of the oriental manuscripts and other articles illustrative of literature science Antiquity and culture*, Calcutta, 1828.

Thurayar and Vanavar founded respectively the Tamil kingdoms subsequently known as the Pandya, Cholas and Chera kingdoms."[128] "The Tamil monarchies-the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas of Sangam age were of great antiquity. It is undeniable that really no new monarchies rose to power. The ancient ones continued with or with outbreak and the chieftancies of one age became the monarchies of other and vice versa. The continuity of the major and minor political dynasties of Tamilakam through many centuries preceding Vijayanagar is undeniable."[129] There were numerous narratives in Tamil that created renewed interest for finding out the history of the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas in Tamilakam. These narratives were based entirely on traditional literature especially the Tamil Anthologies.[130] The pioneer historians attempted to establish historical continuity in Tamilakam by interpreting Tamil Anthologies. Historians also integrated traditional sources and epigraphs and attempted to establish historical continuity of specific kingdoms.[131] The Pallavas, Kakatiyas, Sambuvaraiyar and the Hoysalas are identified as the non-Tamil elements who enriched Tamilakam[132] by their historical role. The nature of political relations among the Cholas the Pandyas and the Pallavas was one of the themes in the

[128] V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1904, p.50.
[129] T.N. Subramanian, *History of Tamilnad to 1545*, Madras 1914, p.246.
[130] Historians preferred to appropriate the information imparted by the Tamil Anthologies without scrutiny. The contents were rearranged in the form of prose. Such narratives were numerous in Tamilakam. To cite a few examples M.Arokiaswamy, *Tamil Nadtararalaru*, Madras, 1938 N.C. Kanthiapillai, *Namatu Nadu* Madras 1945, M. Srinivasa Pillai *Tamilar varalaru* Madras, 1932.
[131] Geographical extent of the Empire, chronological arrangement of events and identifying rulers are the thrust areas in these historical texts. To cite a few examples P. Rajamanickam Pillai *Pallavar Varalaru* Madras, 1941 T.V.Sadasiva Pandarathar, *Pandiyar varalaru*, Annamalai University, 1935.
[132] All the historians of Tamilakam recognise Pallavas as an offshoot of the mixed Aryan race except S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, Rajamanickam, T.N. Subramanian who assert that the Pallavas were of Tamil origin. The Pallavas, Kakatiyas, Hoysalas and the Nayaks of Madrua were represented as adventurous, dynasties "who wielded the destinies of south India for some time" while the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were prioritised over them as "rulers from the earliest times till a very late period." K.V. Subramania Iyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Sekhan*, Madras, 1917, pp. 72-75.

historiography of Tamilakam. Similarly "the Muhammaden invasions of South of India initiated by Alauuddin Khilji and carried forward by the Tuglaks in the South Indian Kingdoms and culture was not enduring."[133] Muhammadans, Kakatiyas, Pallavas and Hoysalas are defined as the non-Tamil elements that appeared in Tamilakam as feudatories/chieftains/ kings. In terms of temporality these are termed as interregnums in between the decline of an Empire and the beginning of another. 'The forces of disintegration' and the aggressive ambitions of the neighbouring chieftains were the historical explanations for such interregnums. These historical explanations are methodologically treated as unproblematic along with the conviction that territorial sovereignty in Tamilakam has antiquity and historical continuity. The historians of Tamilakam were aware that defining the most approximate boundaries of the kingdoms of Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas was the only possible alternative. Hence there were differences of opinion among historians as to the exact boundaries of these kingdoms. But through the mapping of the territorial kingdoms of the Cholas and Pandyas the historians articulated the coherence of Tamilakam.

Historiography of Keralam under Colonialism

The notion of Keralam as a coherent unit is a phenomenon unthought of in the historical texts of west coast. The historians were aware of the heterogeneous nature of the west coast from Tamilakam. This was made possible due to the nature of the sources which were used for the representation of past.

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[133]   S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *South India And Her Muhammaden Invaders* New Delhi, 1921, p.16.

West coast in traditional narratives

The Tamil Anthologies especially Ahananuru and Purananuru are employed by the historians of Keralam as traditional sources. These traditional narratives revealed geographical definitions through the category-tinai. The extent of Tamilakam is not specifically indicated. Keralam was also included in these geographical definitions.[134] The Sangam literature speaks of Malainadu as the territory in Tamilakam under the cheralineage. It is the land beyond western ghats. Traditional Sanskrit literature regarded 'Malanadu' as the region in *Dakshinapatha* beyond the western ghats to where a large number of migrants from the north settled. The later works such as *Keralolpathi* and *Keralamahatmya* elaborated upon this and referred to the frontiers of Malanadu which is termed as *Bhargava Shetra*. It constitutes "the last links of a long chain of migration along the West coast and carrying the tradition of Parasurama.[135] The traditional accounts of *Keralolpathi* speak of Brahmin settlements. It is stated that 36,000 of them were presented with arms (*Sastra Bhiksha*) by Parasurama in order to enable them and to protect and rule Keralam-the 160 *kathams* of land between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari.[136] But local traditions of *keralolpathi* focus on the sixty four villages established on the north and south of Korapuzha.[137] The land beyond Korapuzha is an alien land for them. These settlements are legitimised by the traditions to justify the social privileges and

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[134] M.R. Raghava Varier, *Keralathinte Charithra Manangal* (Mal), Calicut, 1990, p. 24 and also see Rajan Gurukkal and M.R. Raghava Varier, *Keralacharithram*(Mal), Sukapuram, 1989.
[135] Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahmin Settlements In Kerala Historical studies*, Calicut, 1975, p. 27.
[136] M.R. Raghavavarier, *Keralathinte Charithra Manangal* (Mal), Calicut, 1990 p. 49.
[137] M.R. Raghavavarier, *Keralolpathi Granthavari* (Mal), Calicut, 1984, p. 90.

identity of the brahmins unlike the Sangam literature which focuses on occupational groups in relation to nature the literacy genres *ula* and *parani* were patronised by royalty. They refer to the two lineages of Keralam and Cheran in Malanadu.[138] The non-literary traditions of Keralam were numerous. *Puthuram Pattukal, Thottampattukal, Padapattukal, Tullal pattukal, Theyyam pattukal* dealt with religious or secular themes. The genre that had religious motifs presented profane geography among multiple meanings of the concerned tradition. *Vadakkan Pattukal, Thekkan Pattukal, Valiyathampi pattu, Kunju thampi pattu* narrate descriptions of the valour of the hero and descriptions of regions associated with his activities. *Margam Kalipattu* and *Pallippattukal* speak of vettatturajyam and vettattumannan. This ruler is regarded as the patron of christianity. The different literary traditions categorised as Manipravala tradition speak of regions which are associated with the motifs of the text. Space appear as one among the multiple meanings of the text.[139] The admixture of facts and fiction in songs also refer to Zamorin, Chirakkal Thampuruan, Kottayathu Thampuran, Vadagaranadu and Moopan of Palyakottah.[140]

Among these local narratives *Keralolpathi* and *Keralamahatmyam* were heavily relied upon as sources of historical truth. The historians eliminated the inconsistencies in these texts and appropriated the contents as historical truth. The discussions on the vamsa of the kings of Travancore (*The History of Travancore from the Earliest Times: 1878 A.D.*) the descriptions of the origins

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[138] V.V. Swaminatha Mahama Gopathya, *Muvarula*, Madras, 1992 (Reprint) p. 49.
[139] C.Krishnan Nair, *Pattukavitakalude Samuhya Prasakthi* (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1994, p.28.
[140] *Op.cit.* p. 124.

of the lineage of zamorins, (*The Zamorins of Calicut from The Earliest Times to A.D. 1806: 1938*) the descriptions of the origins of the vamsa of the rulers of Cochin (*The Progress of Cochin: 1932*) reveal that the traditional historiographic frame work was adopted as the normative frame work for the glorification of rulers.[141] While the historiography of Tamilakam attempted at counter historicisation of Dravidian culture, the historiography of Keralam was rooted in the then existing social cleavage between the brahmin communities (designated as Aryan) and the non-brahmins.[142]

Role of Travelogues in Colonial Historiography of Keralam

In the historiography of west coast travelogues were employed as true sources of historical knowledge. The travelogues of Varthema, Durate Barbosa, Nuniz, Domingopaes are regarded as accounts left by eyewitnesses. The travel accounts offered various definitions of Malabar. The entire west coast was designated as the sea coast of land of Malabar.[143] It was invariably called Manibar, Malibar Malaibar by different foreign travellers. Abususur designates the land extending from Santapur to Quilon as malaibar-land of pepper. His narratives speak of the important harbours-Baswe, Bardar and Mangalore.[144]

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[141] "Travancore royal family maintains a high degree of purity in its marriage relations than does the Cochin Rajah in the social scale the Travancore Royal family may be considered better kshatriyas than those in the north" K.P. Shangoony Menon, *History of Travancore from the Earliest Times*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1878, p.14.

[142] It is stated that culture and its plurality was axiomatic in the definition of Keralam in historiography. The society was historicised as consisting of five identities-the brahmins, non-brahmins, muslims, christians and the tribals. For further details on the role of culture in the interpretations of Kerala history see E.M. Sankaran Namboothiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*, Part I (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1947 pp. 24-47.

[143] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India From Megasthanies to Makuvan*, Historical Series, no. 14, Madras, 1129, p. 5.

[144] Velayudhan Panikassery, *Ibnbatuta kanda India* (Mal) Madras, 1964, p. 21.

He also speaks of the Raja of Fili (Ezhimala) Jarfathen (Srekandapuram) Jaffathan (Dharmadan) Baffathan (Valiapattnam). The travelogue refers to many places, and events. Malabar was defined as "the place of entry to the western coast from the kingdom of Vijayanagar."[145] Barbosa designates the land "extending from Cumbola to Cape-comorin as Malabar. Sheikh Zain-ud-din defines Malabar as the west coast extending from Cambay in Gujarat to the extremity of the peninsula. He designates Malabar as an entity that had great commercial and strategic importance.[146] The travelogues regard kerobotras and pandyas as the kings who control the trading centres. The travellers were motivated by political and commercial prospects. Yet a few were motivated by the desire to win the fame of having seen the unknown world. Descriptions of towns, centres of trade, articles of trade, trade routes were the themes discussed in the travelogues. Since trade is associated with law and order a few details of law justice, and ruling authorities are mentioned. They speak of the kingdoms of Travancore, Quilon, Cochin and Calicut as major territorial divisions. Unaccustomed with the indigenous concept of power and its diffusion they portrayed ruling authorities as kings and territories as kingdoms.[147] Barbaosa mentions Venad Attikal of Tripappur Swarupam, Kolattiri of Chirakkal Swarupam as kings of Quilon and Kannur. Kurumbiyathii Swarupam,

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[145] E.F. Oaten, *European Travellers In India*, London, 1909, p.64.
[146] This notion of Malabar as an entity is appropriated by historians. Malabar is viewed as one of the three major kingdoms K.M. Panikkar politically define Keralam through the categories of kings with sovereignty, Rajas, minor princely families, who exercised theocratic oligarchy. For the relevant discussion see K.M. Panikkar, *Malabar And the Portuguese*, Bombay 1929, p.5.
[147] S. Raju, *Politics and Culture in Kerala: A Study of Travancore State*. Ph.D thesis submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1999, p.74.

Puranattukara Swarupam, Paruppukavil Swarupam are translated as the kingdoms of Kolathunadu, Kottayam and Parappanadu.[148] The opinions of Barbosa influenced the historians of Keralam who employed the categories of kingdoms and minor principalities." The so-called kings/rulers of medieval Travancore had been broadly formalised by historians and others in different ways which involves category displacement and conceptual slippage.[149]

Defining Malayala Rajyam

Pacchumoothathu and many others historians regard that the term Keralam is of later origin. It is stated that the term was derived from the abundance of coconut trees in the region. Malayalanadu/Malayala Rajyam was the epithet employed by the historians of Kerala in the history of regional Kingdom. From 1850 onwards there was increasing consciousness of significance of Malayalam as the medium of communication. This consciousness of linguistic identity was the result of the missionary activities in Keralam. The official writings suggested that the patronage of missionaries would enable the company to effect the civilising mission with out much expense.[150] The missionaries also glorified the civilising mission of the British in Keralam[151] to

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[148] *Op.cit.* p. 214.
[149] *Op.cit.* p. 262.
[150] Francis Buchanan, *A Journey From* Madras Through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar, New Delhi, 1907, Vol. I, p. 72.
[151] The missionary literature recorded their gratitude to the British authorities for their patronage. To cite a few examples Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* New Delhi, 1883 pp. 378-395 and also see Francis Day *The Land of Perumals or Cochin Its past And Present* New Delhi, 1990 (Reprint) pp. 92-109

effect the civilising mission with out much expense.[152] The missionaries often justified and glorified the civilising mission of the British.[153]

The writings of missionaries state that knowledge of India and its curiosities was considered a fashion among the elite in England. Most of the missionaries stayed in South India for many years. Evangelisation being the prime motive, they focused on socio-religious practices of the natives and the down trodden. The missionaries picture India as the land which needed a highly evolved religion, (christian) culture (Western) and rationality. They believed that these were totally unknown to the heathens of this land. The significant features of missionary writings on the native society are a) the construction of an unchanging society based on hierarchy b) the ideas of social progress.[154] The ideas of social progress motivated the British policies of education in India. The missionaries also translated many of the traditions that dealt with non-christian themes communication with the common folk was one of the basic necessities for evangelisation. Hence most of them studied the native languages and made remarkable contributions to the development of language through studies in linguistics. The Serampore christian missionaries rendered active assistance in the compilation of Telugu-English dictionary. The company's territories in South India had vastly increased since the 1760s. The board of Revenue insisted on the

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[152] Francis Buchanan, *A journey from Madras Through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, New Delhi, 1907, Vol. 1, p. 72.

[153] The missionary writings thanked the British administrators for their valuable assistance and encouragement. To cite a few examples Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* New Delhi, 1883, pp. 378-395 and also see Francis Day, *The Land of Perumals or Cochin its past and present* New Delhi, 1990 (Reprint), pp. 92-109.

[154] Rev. John Abbs, Twenty-two Years Missionary Experience in Travancore, London, 1870, p.76-81 and also see Rev. J. White House, *Lingering of Light In A Dark Land*, U.K., 1873.

acquisition skills by its officials. The college at Fort William began to recruit teachers of South Indian languages and encouraged the production of texts of grammar and dictionaries. As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century French missionaries compiled a Telugu-French dictionary. Among the foreign missionaries in Keralam and Tamil Nadu only the works of Father Arnos, Benjamin Baily, Fr. Paulinos, Herman Gundert and Bishop Caldwell are available to us. Among them Father Arnos (John Earnest Hogslanden) of Germany, Bishop Caldwell and Herman Gundert of Germany made significant contributions to Tamil through compilation of bilingual dictionaries and books on Tamil grammar. The dictionaries that were compiled by the missionaries in Malayalam language are given in (Table 3.1). These developments in language and literature through the participation of both the colonizes and the colonized brought "the conquest of languages."[155]

Thus the missionaries studied Malayalam to facilitate better propagation of religion. It was a social necessity to create cohesiveness and instil confidence in the minds of new converts in different parts of Kerala through instructions. This compelled the early missionaries of Keralam to write pamphlets and Journals in Malayalam. The journals and pamphlets created the consciousness of Malayala Rajyam. Though no rigid frontiers were mentioned the journals and pamphlets designated the land extending from Gokarnam to Southern boundaries

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[155] The term is borrowed from P. Sudhir, he explores how the compilation of Dictionaries and grammar was one of the crucial devices of colonial hegemony. He illustrates this in the context of Telugu language. He states that bilingual dictionaries were not merely toxical tools but they constructed a cultural universe. For relevant details see P. Sudhir, "Colonialism and the Vocabularies of Dominance" in Tejeswani Niranjana, (ed.) *Interrogating Modernity Culture and Colonialism in India* Delhi, 1983, pp. 335-348.

of the state of Travancore as Malayala Rajaym.[156] The image of Malayala

Rajyam is reinforced in *Keralapazhama* also. *Malayalam Rajyam*

Charithrathodu Kudiya Bhoomisastram (Bassal mission: 1870) associated

language and geography in the identity of Malayala *Rajyam*. This new epithet

gradually displaced the traditional epithet of Perumal Rajyam. Naturally even the

pioneer historians perceived the unit of their study as the kingdom in the entity

Malayala Rajayam.

Anthropological Writings

In the anthropological writings the west coast was considered as a region

in the larger unit of Southern India. The ethnographic survey initiated in 1901

was carried out in the provinces and states of the British Indian Empire with a

view to "investigating and recording the manners and customs of the tribes and

castes in their respective areas."[157] Differences in conceptual apparatus and

trends are visible in these writing. The pioneer anthropologists followed the

conventional geographical division of India namely the trans vindhyan and

vindhyan. The categorised the inhabitants of Southern India into the civilised and

the aborigins. The latter were defined as the "non-brahmin community."[158] The

hill tribes and other non-brahmin castes backward in socio-economic status were

grouped together as the domain of study. It was subjected to investigation. Their

marriage customs magio religious rites and social practices were observed and

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[156] Raghavan Puthupally states that the term Malayala Rajyam was a new epithet which is of late origin. Till then the land was referred to as Malainadu/Perumal Rajyam. Raghavan Puthuppally, *Pathrapravarthana Charithram*, Thrissur 1988, p. 54.
[157] Edgar Thurston. *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*, Madras, 1989 (Reprint), p.4.
[158] *Op.cit.* p. 5.

information was collected and compiled. In this context the information in the local accounts were also appropriated. Thus the pioneer writings being empirical were descriptive in nature. The same trend is visible in *The Travancore Castes and Tribes* (L.A. Krishna Iyer, 1937). The author stated that "the enquiry was to understand the effect of contact with civilisation on the primitive tribes of Travancore.[159] Sixteen tribes and hillmen "who were living in the hills from time immemorial" were studied. The regions occupied by them, there traditions, customs, manners, suggestions for their betterment were the areas of investigation. Later kinship was extensively employed as a tool of analysis. For this later anthropologist the idea of Dravidian kinship is necessarily linked to the historical and cultural area of Southern India that also included Ceylon. On the basis of data derived from various sources of India and Ceylon such as law, religious literature and traditions, chronicles and inscriptions. Certain rules of identification were formulated.[160]

Thus west coast was a part of the larger unit Southern India. Dravidian kinship system was regarded as the binding factor between different regions irrespective of linguistic differences. The cleavage between the brahmins and non-brahmins was reiterated through the conceptual apparatus of race. In accordance with the ethos of contemporary society dominated by the elite the historians of Keralam combined race and castes as explanatory model for

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[159] L.A. Krishna Iyer, *The Travancore Castes and Tribes*, Trivandrum, 1937, p.3.
[160] The rule of cross-cousin marriages and kinship terminologies are regarded as the basis of Dravidian system of kingship. For further details see, David Troutsmann, *Dravidian kingship* New Delhi. 1958.

illustrating social hierarchy. The degree of pollution was employed as a tool of analysis for explaining the hierarchical order of society in Keralam.[161]

The historians of Keralam were preoccupied with the historicisation of specific political units such as Travancore/Cochin/Calicut. The exemption was *The History of Kerala* (4 vol.) (K.P. Padmanaba Menon, 1935). As such in the west coast there was no historicisation of identity of Keralam either in terms of territorial integrity or culture. Travancore Cochin and Calicut are treated as the conspicuous kingdoms in Keralam. Historians focused on any one of them as the real domain of historical significance. The long association with the British and their history created the conviction that kingdom is the criterion of historicisation. So the kingdoms of Travancore/Cochin/Calicut were viewed as exclusive political units. They were perceived as historiographic units distinct from each other.[162]

The historical texts always attempted to narrate events in signal years of each ruler. Thus the pioneer historical texts were of the simplest kind. The texts were preoccupied with a) origin of the royal family b) wars and administrative reforms of rulers c) Trade relations with the Portuguese, Dutch and the British d) Details of adoption in to the royal families, e) ceremonies associated with royalty.

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[161]   K.P. Padmanaba Menon. *History of Kerala*, Vol. III, Ernakulam, 1935.
[162]   This is attributed to the existence of the native states of Travancore, Cochin and Calicut under the respective royal lineages even in the 19th century. It is asserted that a true history of Keralam is a great necessity. What was regarded as history was only the chronicle of rulers and eulogies of rulers. T.H.P. Chentharassery, *Ilamkulavum Kerala Charithravum* (Mal), Trivandrum, 1988, p.16.

Certain factors such as increased revenue through maritune trade, expulsion of an aggressive aristocracy and territorial expansions assigned new dignity to ruling authorities. Dignified royalty sought new dimensions of history for enhancing legitimacy. This necessitated the maintenance of records. Trustworthy men were appointed in palace to write chronicles (*Granthavari*). Aristocratic families associated with palaces, temples also maintained records that coloured historians of Keralam considered that the antiquity and historical continuity were the necessary conditions for the legitimacy of royal lineage. The History of *Travancore Thiruvithamcore Charithram* (Pacchumoothathu: 1867 AD) in Malayalam served this need through the compilation of the dynastic history of Travancore. The pamphlet traces the origin of the royal lineage from the *perumals*. The author states that History is the objective narration of character and achievements of great men.[163] The historians of colonial ages proceed with the conviction that *Bhoopathi* (king) is the pivot of administration (*Rajya dharma*) and is the owner of Rajya.

The historiographic reflections of the West Coast reveal the recognition of 'part' and 'whole' as methodologically unproblematic. There is the recognition of Malanadu as a unit distinct from other regions in India. But more significance is attributed to the respective kingdom that is selected as the object of historicisation. The specific region of study is recognised as a part of Malanadu. The presuppositions and of this historiographic unity and non-unity are derived

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[163] For the relevant discussion see. Pacchu Moothathu, *Thiruvithamcore Charithram*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1867, pp. 4-6.

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out of different genres of literature such as traditional narratives, travelogues and missionary literature. The historical interpretations from these sources reveal the presuppositions concepts and reinforcements in the historical texts of the kingdoms of Travancore/Cochin/Calicut.

While the pioneer historians such as Pacchumoothathu, Diwan Madhava Rao and P.Shangoony Menon employed traditional narratives and palace records a sources new categories of sources were available to the later historians of Kerala. Travelogues, anthropological writings, missionary literature and official literature were the new categories of sources. The historians of Keralam extensively employed these sources.

To sum up, the historiographic reflections of the historians of Tamilakam and Keralam reveal that in spite of their awareness of the absence of the far south in Indian historiography, it is not historiographic unity but historirgraphical non unity which characterises the historical texts in the far south. The notions of whole and part is reiterated in these historical texts also. The mapping of South India thus reveals two parallel genres of historical production. The historiography of Tamilakam articulated notions of Tamil identity and Tamilakam. This was accomplished by converging pluralities in the mapping of Tamilakam. Contrary to this political atmosphere of princely states in Keralam rendered plurality as the normative framework of historiography. The social experiences of contemporary world motivated the production of history in the Far South in a manner which exhibited tremendous differences. For Tamilakam it was the projection of the self, designated as Dravidian. The historicisation Tamil

identity in historiography also reveals that the perception that is a Tamil and what is Tamilakam has undergone changes from time to time. It also reveals that the identity of the Tamils is elaborated from analytical models of sociology. This often results in dissolving the meanings and associations that are really in them. For Keralam it was in tune with the political and social experiences of contemporary world rooted in the cleavage between the brahmins and non-brahmins.

Chapter IV

Historian's Craft in South India under Colonialism- A Methodological Critique

In the field of representation of past, modernity revealed the distinction between historical literature and history. By defining what is history, and how it should be written, modernity defined a space between historical literature and history. This space is the context of this chapter. This was a domain of dogmatism. Specific rules and principles were popularised as the necessary conditions for the writing of legitimate history. This chapter is a reassessment of historical methodology in South India under colonialism. This chapter attempts to study the conceptual models, theories of history, assumptions and interpretations behind the craft of historians. The analytical procedure employed by historians and the role of historical interpretations in the making of the past are examined.

This chapter is not concerned with an evaluation of truth or falsity of the contents of the historical texts in Keralam and Tamilakam under colonialism. With due respect for these early historians, this is not an attempt to minimise their meticulous studies or their sense of dedication to true history. This chapter attempts to trace this transition from traditional forms of

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representation of past to the eurocentric, modern forms of representation of Past. So this chapter illustrates the assumptions, interpretations and methods of study which rendered this transition sensible and acceptable.

This attempt also reveals that in spite of the general agreement on elements essential for the writing of scientific history, even historians who followed the same historical methodology, brought forth contradictory conclusions on certain issues which were termed by historians as "historical questions."

Defining scientific writing of History

India has no past, whatever it has is illconstructed past. Indian literature at least of the ancient and medieval times sadly lack any chronological framework worth the name. It is tainted with a profuse and indiscriminate intermixture of all sorts of legendary and mythical stuff and what is more provoking than these to one engaged in the construction of a scientific history of the past is to find the generality of the Indian people exhibiting an incidental prowess to accept any work of literature as sober history or their past and a tendency to anathematize those who disbelieve the veracity of their literature."[1]

In this extract the author points out the absence of scientific history in India and the reasons for this absence of history. He also illustrates the ahistorical sense of Indians and affirms the need for the scientific writing of history in India. The absence of history in the southern regions of India is recognised in the broader

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[1]   K.N. Sivarajapillai, *The Chronology of the Early Tamils*, Madras, 1932, p.124.

context of India. What is recognised as absence of history is not the absence of the means (source materials) to produce history. The indigenous literature was criticised not for the dearth of historical information but for the lack of coherence, order and continuity.[2] "The ill constructed past" refers to the absence of scientifically validated, written history in the context of India which is also relevant to the south of India. "The ill constructed past" is regarded as the feature of ancient and medieval periods of India. The modern age is exempted "as the age for the study of which scientifically validated documents are available."[3] The colonial historians illustrated two orders of writing history. The fictive order which characterised the indigenous representation of past, and the scientific order which characterised Western history.

The self reflexivity of historians revealed their sense of distinction between history and literature. "The facts of ancient Tamil history enshrined in early poems and set in a highly artificial grouping were not quarried systematically nor sifted and

[2]   S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *The Beginnings of South Indian History*, Madras, 1918, p.24.
Coherence. chronological ordering of events and continuity are regarded as the essential components of historical texts. But post modernism consider these as a sort of linked and mistaken assumptions based on the conviction that all the phenomena of a period has its own laws of cohesion: they have their own systems of homogeneous relations and networks of casualty. Focault points out that there is contradiction in this new history because the new history focuses on series. divisions etc. and there by challenges the above sated assumptions. For the relevant discussion see Michele Barrett (ed.) *The Politics of Truth From Marx to Foucault*, London. 1991, pp.121-123. Lyn Hunt attributed this notion of unity of the text which existed among historians of modernity to the philosophy of the Age of Reason by which "narratives in symbolic language gave way to facts in the essentialist language" Lyn Hunt, (ed) *The New Cultural History*, London, 1989, 120.
[3]   S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *The Beginnings of South Indian History*, Madras, 1918, p.124.

chronologically so as to enable readers to get a clear consecutive and intelligible account of a past."[4] The dominant assumption of colonial historiography was that truth could be produced only by finding out and eliminating errors and contradictions in indigenous literature. The historians believed that "through confirmatory evidence the historians should separate the facts from the figments of imagination in which they are embedded."[5] The historians also realised that literary sources should be approached with caution. They asserted that finding out history (facts) from traditional literature was very difficult. "It is difficult to workout a connected history from Sangam literature due to the precedence of literary style and descriptions."[6] Thus the colonial historians visualised two domains in the indigenous literature of their regions—the domain of literary imagination and a domain of historical facts.

The faith and mission of colonial historians of Tamilakam and Keralam was to write history truthfully and objectively. They also defined history as "the connected study of the past."[7] Thus the

[4] K.N. Sivarajapillai, *The Chronology of the Early Tamils*, Madras, 1932, p.131.

[5] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *The Beginnings of South Indian History*, Madras, 1918, p.32.
Fact was one among the key issues discussed in the critical philosophy of History. E.H. Carr regards facts as the outcome of the choice of historians. This was opposed by other scholars. To cite an example "Factual history is not a science as the naive positivism fancied. It is an integral part of history as an indispensable technique" Joseph Evans *on the philosophy of History*, London, 1959, p. 131.

[6] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*, Madras, 1935, p. 6.
The life cycle of cultures proposed by Oswald Spengler greatly influenced the historians of 18th century. It was criticised as being based on speculative philosophy of history. Spengler derived these ideas from comparative morphology. He was accused of 'biologizing history.' This term is borrowed form William Dray. He states "Historiography was interested in knowing causal connection of the events and a relativism developed. This epoch understands history by analogy with nature. It has taken over the idea of evolution through only with regard to single epochs and spheres of culture and not with regard to history as a whole." William Dray, *Perspectives in History*, New York, 1982, p. 94 and also see the similar trend in Bultmann D. Rudolf *History And Eschatology*, London, 1957, p. 78.

idea of a coherent history with in the framework of chronology dominated colonial historiography. The absence of "a connected history" was recognised by the historians of Tamilakam and Keralam.[8] 'The connected history' of Tamilakam/Keralam was recognised as a social responsibility by the historians of Tamilakam and Keralam.[9] There was renewed interest for finding out "connected history" from indigenous literature. This was not considered as an impossible task."[10]

The methods, concepts and logic employed by colonial historians to extract history from indigenous literature were derived from methods, concepts and reasoning which were employed for the study of natural sciences in the enlightened scientific era. To the colonial historians the fictive structure and discontinuities in traditional narratives were problematic. The objective/neutral language was regarded as the necessary condition for the writing of objective history. Poetic exaggerations and fables in traditional narratives were disqualified as that which obliterated historical truth. They believed that there "is intricate relationship between

[8]   To cite an example "I am surprised to find that the political history of this principality is a blank all beyond the immediate present ------ while several even of the minor barons of Great Britain are able to trace their blueblood twice that period. How long are we to remain in this lamentable if not disgraceful condition of ignorance" P. Sundarampillai *Some Early Soverigns of Travancore*, Madras, 1894, p. xxvi.
[9]   "While we have histories of the Pandya and chola kingdoms we have no separate history of Keralam apart from the Cheras." P. Shungoony Menon *History of Travancore From the Earliest Times To 1867 A.D* 1878 p. 52.
[10]   M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p. 14.

form of presentation and content."[11] Thus colonial historians

disqualified the autonomy of the author which was manifested

through the fictive structures in traditional narratives.[12] But the

autonomy of the author reappears in historical texts. Selection of

sources, interpretation of sources, and historical methods employed

by the historians reveal the autonomy of historians.

Historiographical reflections in the texts of Keralam and

Tamilakam illustrate that each historian attempted to represent past

with in a framework of his own choice. In spite of the mission to

write history objectively there were differences of opinion among

historians in their attitude to sources. The historians of Travancore

stated that in addition to traditional literature they scrutinised a

variety of documents, official correspondences, epigraphic

inscriptions, settlement registers of palaces, treaties, property

documents, private papers were employed by them as sources.

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[11] Moyd S. Krammer, *Literature, Criticism and Historical Imagination* in Lyn Hunt (ed) *The New Cultural History*, London, 1989, p. 124.

[12] Richard white criticises that this negation of autonomy of the author is a feature of continental philosophy. He states that from kant to existentialists 'subject' was one of the major themes of study. Different terms were used to indicate subject (transcendental ego, being, self etc.) in their writings. Their individual sovereignty still remains problematic. For further discussions on the autonomy of the author as self see Richard White "Autonomy As Foundational in High J. Silverman (ed) *Truth/Subjectivity/Culture*, London, 1993, pp. 87-140.

Contrary to this the post modern writers reveal the benefits of autonomy of the author. They prefer archival research (diaries, private papers etc.) Carolyn Ellis states that this method stems from openess and is in contrast to ideological interpretations. This is illustrated by her by presenting four versions of the story of William Gilbert. For further details see Carolyn Ellis "Archiaval Research in Intertextual Analysis" in Carolyn Ellis and Mechael G. Flaberty (ed) *Investigating subjectivity: Research on Lived Experiences*, California 1992. Wendy C. Wickevise states that it is the written history which has limitations and is problematic. He illustrates this by illustrating the stories which survive in memory about the British explorer Fraser, among the tribals in Phillipines. For further details see Wendy C. Wick Wise, "To see ourselves as the others: Nlakapamwy contact Narratives" in *The Canadian Historical Review* Vol. XXV No. 1 March 1994 pp. 178-195.

The pioneer historian Pacchu Moothathu stated that in addition to these he also consulted the opinions of men of reputation as confirmatory evidence for the clarification of specific events. Diwan Madhava Rao also narrated the different categories of sources scrutinised by him for the writing of his text on Travancore. These pioneer historians assumed that a "true, connected history of the kings of Travancore"[13] was a necessity. They believed that the scattered fragments of indigenous literature which were the only available sources were false accounts as they were fictitious in nature.[14]

There was a hierarchical ordering of these different categories of sources in terms of their authenticity which was determined by the convictions of historians Pacchu Moothathu and Diwan Madava Rao considered the epics and puranas as more reliable than the local narratives. The epics and puranas were scrutinised by these historians as sources which explained the origin of the dynasty of Travancore. Kanakasabhai the pioneer historian of Tamilakam believed that the descriptions of the origin of Chera, Chola and Pandyan kingdoms as found in the epics were

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[13] The pioneer historian of Keralam Pacchu Moothathu believed that history was the biography of great men. He considered that a true and connected history of the kings of Travancore was a necessity because the existing versions about the kings and royal family contained grater amount of elements of fiction as these were based on fragments of liteature Pacchu Moothathu *Thiruvithamcore Charithram* (Mal) Trivandrum, 1867 pp 4-7 and also see K.P. Padmanaba Menon. *Thiruvithamcore (venadu) Rajavamsam* (Mal) Thrissur, 1989 (Reprint) p. 9.

[14] P. Shangoony Menon. *History of Travancore From the Earliest Times To 1867 AD*. Madras, 1878. p. 18.

true accounts of the past. Kanakasabhai narrated "The pandyan king called himself panchavan (the descendants of the five) and kaurian (of the line of the *Kurus*) names which clearly indicate his origin from the pandus who were five brothers. The city of Madura retains to this day its ancient name and thus bears living testimony to the fact that the descendants of the pandus who ruled in Muttra had in early times established their power in the southern most parts of the Peninsula."[15] There were historians who evaluated these sections in the Mahabharata as interpolations "Historicity and even plausibility are not needed for an assessment of the historical worth of the statements found in them."[16]

The historiographical reflections of Keralam reveal the ambivalent approach of historians to traditional literature. The author of *History of Travancore from the Earliest Times to 1867 A.D.* considered the local narratives as "full of imagination" but he considered *puranas* as "reliable sources." On the basis of *puranas* he traced the origin of the dynasty of Travancore "to the beginnings of the World."[17] Through the descriptions in puranas he traced the origin of the dynasty from Yayathi and illustrated that the dynasty of Travancore continued to rule many hundred thousands of years

[15] V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago* Madras 1904, p. 124.
[16] T.N. Subramanian, *History of Tamilnadu To 1565 A.D.* Madurai.
[17] P. Shangoony Menon, *History of Travancore From the Earliest Times To 1867 A.D.*, Madras, 1878. p. 13.

without interruption."[18] The historiographical reflections of Keralam reveal that this notion of antiquity was an obsession which the historians found it impossible to shed off.

He criticised Pacchu Moothathu for his reliance on Sanskrit works and local narratives and for his want of literary diligence. He asserted the absence of a true connected history of Travancore. The pre-existing texts are regarded as accounts, which contained information which had no historical accuracy as they employed local narratives.[19] But this historian also incorporated local narratives occasionally. The origin of Kollam era is traced to a local narrative and the origin of Kollam era is historicised as Udayamarthadan incident.[20]

There were differences of opinion among scholars as to the reliability of traditional Sanskrit literature as a source. P. Shangoony Menon asserted "on such a work as the *Keralolpathi* little reliance can be placed."[21] *Keralolpathi* is assessed as a composition in Sanskrit "embellished with ideas and statements supplied by imagination a practice among Sanskirt scholars."[22] But historians like Sathianatha Aiyar recognised the historical content in legends. Legends were regarded as sources which mixed up facts

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[18] *Op. cit.*, p. 17.
[19] *Op. cit.*, p. 42.
[20] Elamkulam P.N. Kunjanpillai, *Samskarathinte Nazhikakallukal* Trichur, 1958, p. 16.
[21] P. Shangoony Menon, *History of Travancore from The Earliest Times of 1867 A.D.*, Madras, 1878, p. 41.
[22] *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

and fiction.[23] As such popular traditions were reiterated in the historiography of Keralam and Tamilakam. The tradition of *Cheraman Perumal* and the tradition of *Perumals* by dint of reiteration came to be regarded as correct."[24]

The compositions of Sanskrit were regarded as works being "written by cultured men who had free access to all necessary information."[25] But the epics were rated as secondary to other categories or sources "The future historian of ancient South India will seek his material in the numismatic, epigraphic, literacy linguistic, traditional and archaeological records of the Dravidian people rather than in the epics of Aryan India."[26] It was also believed that "the native chronicles and memories of later ages should be approached with caution."[27]

There were historians who discredited Sanskrit literature as a source for writings the history of Tamilakam. "The *itihasas* have undergone continuous embellishments so that any attempts to derive history from these sources will be as Nilakanta Sastri says

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[23]   "Contemporary literature and traditions as transmitted in literary records supply as with materials with which we have to construct history." R. Sathianatha Aiyar *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, Madras. 1924. p. 259. The possibility for the presence of factual contents in tradition of Cheram Perumal was pointed out by many historians. To cite a few examples Velayudhan Parikkasseri, *Keralam Perumakkanmarude Kalathu* (Mal) Quilon, 1963 and also C. Atchutha Menon *Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911 pp. 96-97.

[24]   Elamkulam P.N. Kuryanpillai, *Cherasamrajyam Onpathum Pathum Noottandukalil* (Mal), Kottayam, 1961.

[25]   R. Sathianatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, Madras, 1924, p. 68.

[26]   P.T. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *History of The Tamils from the Earliest Times to 600 A.D.* Madras, 1931. p. 13.

[27]   R. Sathianatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, Maduras, 1924, p. 21.

like trying to read history in the Arthusian legends."[28] There were historians who prioritised indigenous literature over Sanskrit literature. "Indigenous literature of early unsophisticated stages of literature which existed long before the rise of the much later artificial poetry of Sanskrit and Tamil were based on the actual customs and manners of the people. Poetry was a mirror of the hope led by the people of those times."[29] Literary works of especially religious literature of later ages were viewed with suspicion. "The local puranas most of them being purely mythical put us on the wrong scent and in some cases operate as counteracting agent in our researches.[30] Indigenous astronomical calculations are regarded as "leading more to confusion than to conclusion."[31] The historiographical reflections of Tamilakam reveal that scholars held different views on the Tamil epics *Chilappathikaram* and *Manimekalai* as sources for the writing of history. The pioneer historians V. Kanakasabhai, and P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar employed them as sources which contained information about the social practices of Tamil in the third century A.D. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar narrates from *Manimekalai* the five methods of disposing of the dead which prevailed among the Tamils in the third century. One of

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[28]   T.N. Subramanian, History of Tamil Nadu to 1565 A.D. Madurai, 1911, p. 64.
[29]   P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils from the Earliest Times to 600 A.D.*, Madras 1931, p. 63.
[30]   M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914 p. 387.
[31]   K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pnadyan Kingdom*, Madras 1929 p. 19.

the methods described was the practice of disposing the corpse in an open place to be eaten by vultures. He concluded that since Persia "was the only early nation who exposed the dead in this fashion the Tamil Dravidians in his march towards India must have lived in Persia and moved with Persians sufficiently long to adopt the above custom."[32]

Tamil epics as sources

There were differences of opinion among historians on the role of Tamil classics-*Chilappathikaram*, *Manimekalai* and *Tholkappiyam* as sources for the writing of history of Tamilakam. An analytical reading of traditional narratives was the early methodology which was known to the pioneer scholars. V. Kankasabhai accepted the contents of *Chilappathikaram* and *Tholkappiyam* as historical truth. He reiterated the story of the heroic valour of *Cheran Chenkudduvan* as truth. "One of the Chera kings called *Chenkudduvan* who was contemporary with *Gajabahu* of Ceylon is said to have been on intimate terms of friendship with the *Karnas* emperors of Magadha and with their assistance he attacked the Aryas near the Himalayas."[33] There were historical narratives in Keralam during the colonial period. The authors

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[32] P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils from the Earliest Times to 600 A.D.* Madras, 1931, p.17.
[33] V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1914, p. 248.

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translated the contents of traditional literature and represented them as truth. These historical narratives attracted the common people. The story of *Chenkudduvan* was thus historicised.[34]

This was evaluated as the methodological error committed by Kanakasabhai in the writing of history.[35] The chronological ordering of kings by Kanakasabhai on the basis of *Chilappathikaram* was also questioned. He identified Nirrangaran in *Chilappathikaram* as *satakarni*. This is regarded as "highly untenable as no foreigner has ever dealt with proper name in this fashion."[36] There were endless discussions among historians on the truth/falsity on the identification of rulers and the chronological ordering of kings.

Through new evidences from inscriptions, historians falsified the assumptions of early historians that the rulers and poets mentioned in these Tamil epics were contemporary. On the basis of evidences in inscriptions, it was pointed out that interpolations in literary compositions were common. It was asserted that "Although *Chilappathikaram* and *Manimekalai* are classed among the Sangam works. Serious doubts may justly be entertained as to whether they speak of contemporary kings and events; and therefore great caution is necessary before utilising wholesale the material consisted in them. Several savants of Tamil literature would not

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[34]   To cite a few examples P. Thanupillai, *Chenguttva Perumal* (Mal), Sucheendran, 1934, Aattoor Narayana Pisharadi, *Keralacharithram* (Mal), Trichur, 1937, pp. 32-43.

[35]   For the relevant discussion see. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *The Beginnings of South Indian History*, Madras, 1914, p. 24.

[36]   *Op. cit.* p. 191.

like this remark."[37] *Manimekalai* and *Chilappathikaram* are judged as "Compositions of story tellers."[38]

The chief criticism against the Tamil epics was that they were compositions which had no chronological frame work. So these literary works were regarded as "full of improbabilities impossibilities and inconsistencies."[39] The attempts made by the pioneer historian of Tamilakam V. Kanakasabhai are evaluated as "rather destructive in the sense of being imaginative."[40] The pioneer historical texts are regarded as mere translations from literary compositions.

Later it was found out that the information derived from the traditional literary compositions should be considered as true only if it is supported by evidences from inscriptions. Thus critical study of literacy sources alone was later considered as insufficient for the writing of objective history.[41] The evidences from inscriptions were termed as "Corroborative evidence."[42] This method was largely employed in the writing of monographs. Identifying rulers, Chronological ordering of dynasties, administrative reforms, military exploits were the themes of study in these monographs.

The publication of Velvikudi plates, Veluvapalayamplates, Dandakottan Plates, Trichnopoly Rock inscriptions was an

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[37] K.V. Subramania Iyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, Madras, 1914, p. 96.
[38] T.N. Subramanian, *History of Tamil Nadu to 1565 A.D.* Madurai, 1914, p. 64.
[39] P.T. Sriniwasa Iyengar, *The History of Tamils from Early Times to 600 A.D.* Madras, p. 168.
[40] S. Krishan Swami Aiyangar, *The Beginnings of South Indian History*, Madras, 1918, p. 161.
[41] Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *Samkarathinte Nazhika Kallukal* (Mal), Trichur, 1958, p. 17.
[42] This term was employed by S. Krishna Swami Aiyangar, T.N. Subramanian and Venkataramanayya. These historians followed a methodology which integrated inscriptions and literacy sources.

incentive for the writing of objective history. These inscriptions were considered as genuine accounts. If the pioneer historical texts translated the contents of traditional literature as true accounts of past, the monographs adopted the contents of inscriptions as truth. With out scrutiny the historians of monographs accepted the contents of *prasastis* as truth. The *prasastis* described military exploits of rulers. These details of war were historicised as evidences for territorial ambitions and sovereignty of rulers. But "history of the wars and circumstances under which the rulers came in to conflict with the enemies are generally unknown."[43] Another explanation was offered "The denigration in power and personal ability encouraged the border kingdoms to throw off the imperial yoke."[44] Through speculative interpretations[45] the historians of Tamilakam and Keralam attempted to establish continuity in the dynasties of Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas from the beginnings of Christian era.

A series of monographs appeared from the third decade of 19th century. *The Pandyan Kingdom* (K.A. Nilakantasastri: 1928) *Pandyar Varalaru* (Tamil) (Sadasiva Pandarathar: 1935). *The Cera*

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[43] Venkata Ramanayya, *Early Muslim Expansion in India*, Madras, 1943, p.94.

[44] S. Krishna Swami Aiyangar, *South India and Her Muhammadan Invaders*, London, 1921, p. 26.

[45] E.H. Carr states that phenomenological speculations of the enlightenment era paved the way for the new dimensions of scientific enquiry. The new science set the model for the study of social sciences also. E.H. Carr *What is History?* London, 1959, p.73. Professor K. A. Nilakantasastri employs speculations to find out the causes and results of the expedition of Rajendra Chola against Kadaram "As we can get no direct answer to these questions from contemporary records we have to depend on the possibilities suggested by the Makuavn and relevant facts." K.A. Nilakantasastri, *The Colas*, Madras, 1935, p.265. Speculation was the device employed for the creation of chronological ordering of the Chera, Chola, Pandya dynasties of the Sangam age. Often the regnal years and year of accession are based on speculation. This is visible in the historical texts *Historical sketches of Ancient Dekhan, The Chronology of the Early Tamils* and *History of Tamilnad To 1565 A.D.*

Kings of the Sangam period (K.G. Shesha Aiyar: 1937),
Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas (C. Minakshi:
1935), *Pallva Varalaru* (Tamil) (M. Rajamanikkam Pillai: 1944).
Early Muslim Expansion in India (N.Venkataramanayya: 1943) are
the historical texts which deal with a specific dynasty. These
monographs integrated literary and epigraphical sources. They
narrated the accounts on the origin of dynasties from traditional
literature. These were labelled as traditions. These were narrated as
traditional explanations for the origin of dynasties and for the early
phases of kingdoms. Attempts were made by historians to create
chronological ordering of rulers with the evidences from epigraphs.

The theoretical positions in colonial historiography of
Tamilakam and Keralam are based the following assumptions.

a. Centralised state existed in Tamilakam and Keralam.

b. The life forces of this power structure were the ruler, his
personal qualities, and the extent of territory under his
authority.

c. Material and cultural conditions depended on the
presence/absence of state (Kingdom/empire).

d. There were constant battles and revolts among the rulers and
feudatories in Tamilakam and Keralam. These internal
dissensions often brought the decline of the state.

This theoretical position suffers from the limitations of (a) determinism (b) ambivalent attitude towards centralised authority and the dispersion of power. The evidences point out the existence of dispersion of power which is accommodated through the model of autonomous villages.

Similarly the characterisation of the Cola state as highly centralised and bureaucratised, at the same time comparing the local institutions to the autonomous townships of Roman Gual (K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*) is one of the themes of reassessment. While it is criticised as an attempt to glorify the Cola state (T.N. Subramanian, *A History of Tamil Nadu To 1565 A.D.*) it is viewed as the result of inadequate premises in colonial historiography. It is pointed out that due to the conviction in the existence of a centralised state in South of India under the Colas the historians of South of India committed logical fallacies in the interpretation of political evidences from inscriptions.[46] Even eminent historians such as Appadorai, K.A. Nilakantasastri and T.V. Mahalingam assumed that the conditions in the state of economy, society and polity were uniform and static throughout the period of the Chola empire which extended over centuries.[47] The presuppositions on the nature of state as centralised bureaucracy

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[46] Burton Stien, "The State and the Agrarian order in Medieval South India-A Historiographical critique" in Burton Stein, (ed) *Essays on South India*, New Delhi, 1975, p.68.
[47] *Op cit.*, p.69.

were derived from the traditional text. It is pointed out that
evidences were selected from inscriptions which suited these
presuppositions. The changes which acquire in the terms in
inscriptions are not analysed.[48] Similarly the state organization was
studied in the order of central-provincial and the local. Selective
evidences for political organisation without considering the
evidences from the same sources to analyse the role of socio-
economic order in the state is pointed out as a major
methodological error in colonial historiography.[49] The assertions of
Nilakandasastri about "the almost Byzantine royalty of Raja Raja
and his successors," and "a nice balance struck between centralised
control and local initiative" are criticised as inappropriate
explanations of the nature of the state.[50] On the contrary, the
evidence on the links between local networks, social hierarchy and

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[48] *Op cit.*, p.70.
[49] *Op. cit.*, pp. 70-75.
Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan focused on a comparative analysis of he studies on the state of the colas by the American Scholar Burton steen and the Japaneese scholar Karashima. The first is characterized by him as theory with out evidence. The speculative nature of the study is characterised as 'sensational formulations" which only created confusion in academic circles. He favours the studies on south Indian society and state in south India by Noboru Karashima which is regarded as better equipped with statistical information and evidences for his premises. This work is also regarded as being based on an exhaustive analysis of revenue terms on cola inscriptions. The study of the trading activities in the cola state by south hall is criticised by thus" Halls construct of marketing hierarchy and of the nature of the changes the structure underwent rest on premises which are themselves questionable. Hall also failed t provide linkage between nadu, nagaram and mahanagaram and other supra, regional centres of commerce."
Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan sectional President's address SIHC proceedings 5th annual session Mysore, 1955, pp. 110-118). *The studies on south Indian History and society* (studies from inscriptions A.D. 850-1800 by Karashima) is regarded as the text which contains new kinds of enquiry on the statistical and merely informative. The lack of uniformity in the usage of terms and the absence of precise meaning of words are pointed out as the limitations. For a review of this text see Dr. D.N. Jha "Studies in early Indian Economic History." In The Indian Historical Review Vol. No. 1-3 July 1983-Jan 1984, New Delhi, 1984, p. 185.
[50] *Ibid.*

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the formal institutions are illustrated to reveal that the cola state depended on these agencies and it was not a centralised state.[51]

The limitations in colonial historiography of south India are attributed to the selection of themes by the historians. The historians based their studies on inscriptions. The identification rulers, chronological ordering of events were considered as the primary functions of historians. They viewed that this type of history was objective and non argumentative.[52]

It was pointed out that a full fledged economic history of Southern India had to be attempted. It is true that on the model initiated by Gilbert Slater, (*Some South Indian Villages*, 1918) and *Southern India its political and economic problems* (1913), a few attempts were made by economists. *Economic conditions of South India* 1000-1500 A.D. (A. Appadourai: 1936). *Some South Indian Villages: A Resurvey* (P.T. Thomas: 1940) *The Co-operative Movement in the Madras Presidency,* (B.V. Narayanaswamy Naidu: 1933) *Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency 1800-1850,* (Sarada Raju: 1941) *The Handloom Industry in South India* (1940) are rated as texts which focused on specific aspects and failed to view South India as a single unit. *The Economic Conditions In South India* 1000-1500 A.D. is regarded as being (a) based on random samples (b) limited to the core regions of Tamilakam. The qualitative

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51 For further details see Burton Stein, "The State and Agrarian order in Medieval South India" in Burton Stain, (ed) *Essays on South India*, New Delhi, 1975, pp.74-79.

52 The notion of objectivity is regarded as impractical in the writing of history Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan by exposing the sentimental attachment to region, language and race in historiography states. "In my opinion pure and complete objectivity in the 19th century sense of Ranke is a myth. The assertion of a subject object relationship is impractical. It is the historical study of the past in the light of romantic ideas fostered by 19th century Indologists." Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan, Presidential Address, *IHC Proceedings* 29th Annual Session, Hyderabad, 1978, p. 13.

assessment of the historiography of the colonial south attribute lack of development in historical studies due to the absence of new methodologies and new approaches.

The attitude to power as expressed in the colonial historiography characterises battles and wars as revolts for independence. The revolts are also described with details as the causes for the decline of Pandyas, Cholas, Pallavas and Chalukyas. These descriptions often had an under tone that subjection was better than independence. Allegiance to central authority was hailed as essential for the solidarity of an empire. But the experiences in pre-colonial India reveal a situation of constant battles. "It is because of our contacts with the English that we have discovered for the first time the true basis of liberty and national solidarity.[53] *Verram* and *Arram* are regarded as the attributes of rulers. The rulers aspired for the spiritual welfare of the subjects through acts of benevolence (*Arram*). This can be regarded as common both to the historical writings on Tamilakam and Keralam. In the historical writings on Keralam it was '*Rajyadharma*.' These attributes originated from an alliance between religion and philosophy in the sacred traditions of India. The construction of temples is elaborately discussed in the historical writings of Tamilakam. In the historical works on Keralam the king is depicted as the patron

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[53]   Partha Chaterjee. *Nationalist Thought And The Colonial world*, New Delhi, 1986, p.55.

of brahmanas. He invokes the blessings of guardian deity through ceremonies of *Murajabam*, *Tulapurshadana*, *Hiranya Garbha* and acts of charity. "The central philosophical foundation of the overwhelming part of religious beliefs in India including Buddhism lies in the philosophy of *Sankya* which focuses on other worldliness and fatalism."[54]

An analysis of the contents relating to the origin of dynasties reveal that these sections are entirely different from the sections which narrate the modernisation of kingdoms. This section was the area defined by inscriptions. Further the history of inscriptions in the Tamilakam and Keralam showed tremendous differences.[55]

Another historical method was to consider inscriptions as the only reliable source for the writing of objective history. In Keralam this was initiated by P. Sundaram Pillai. He was concerned with the writing of a "genuine account of the rulers of Travancore in the 5th and 6th centuries of Malayalam era."[56] On the basis of epigraphs in the regions of *Thiruvithamcode* he stated that the rulers of Travancore exercised authority in these regions from 1144. Thus he falsified the assumptions of Shangoony Menon that the kings of Travancore ruled these regions from the 14th century. But he neither attempted to glorify the royal family of Travancore nor to present a

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[54] *Op. cit.* p.56.
[55] For details see M.G.S. Narayanan, *The Special Features of Cera Inscriptions of Kerala*. Paper presented at XXII Annual Congress, Epigraphic Society of India, Thanjavur, 1996.
[56] P. Sundaram Pillai, *Some Early Sovereigns of Travancore*, Trivandrum, 1894.

'connected history' of Travancore. He limited his interpretations to statements in epigraphs. So description of incidents were very few.[57]

The historical texts on Keralam under colonialism consisted of two mutually independent epistemic orders. The textual strategies of historians enabled them to combine these two orders. Thus they attempted to illustrate continuity of royal dynasties in the native kingdoms of Travancore Cochin and Calicut. Since indigenous literature was the available source, the historians presented the information derived from different sources. Itihasas, Puranas, dominant local traditions such as *Keralolpathi*, *Keralamahatmyam*, Palace records (*Granthavari*) were consulted. While Pacchu Moothathu and P.Shangoony Menon, reiterated the legends as explanations for the origin of royal dynasties the historians of later ages combined with this the tradition of *Cheraman Perumal* as the explanatory model for the origin of royal dynasties. *The Zamorins of Calicut From The Earliest Times to A.D. 1806* (K.V. Krishna Aiyar: 1938) describes the origin of the *Nediyiruppai Swaroopam* and the royal ceremonies such as *Ariyittuvaccha*, *Hiranyagarbham* and *Thulapurushadanam*. The sources are *kilippattu*, *keralolpathi*, legends and *granthavaris*.

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[57] To cite few examples S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Cheran Vanji*, Madras, 1942 Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *Cheramsamrajyam*, Trivandrum, 1961.

The second part of this text (Chapter VIII to XV) is based exclusively on official records. It narrates the coming of the Europeans, their relations, and treaties with the Zamorins. The invasions of Malabar by Mysore and the treaties of Zamorins with the British are also studied.

Kochi Rajya Charithram (K.P. Padmanaba Menon: 1914) narrates the origin of the royal family of Cochin and the royal ceremonies. The chief sources are *puranas*, traditional Sanskrit literature, local traditions and *Vanjeri Granthavary*. As distinct from other historians he expresses serious doubts about the credibility of these sources.[58] *The Progress of Cochin* (T.K. Krishna Menon, 1932) narrates the history of Cochin "from the very beginnings."[59] The first two chapters narrate the origin of royal family of Cochin in the tone of traditional historiography. Other chapters (II to VIII) narrate the history of the rulers and their administrative reforms. The focus is on the regulations and developments in the different departments of the Kingdom of Cochin deriving the colonial period. Thus it resembles the state manuals of Travancore.[60]

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[58] K.P. Padmanaba Menon, Cochi Rajya Charithram, *The Progress of Cochin* T.K. Krishna Menon: 1932.

[59] T.K. Krishna Menon, *The Progress of Cochin*, Ernakulam, 1932, p. 3.

[60] *Op.cit.*

The author of *Cochin State Manual* stated that "there may be truth content in traditions. So traditions must not be dispensed away."[61]

The State Manuals were rather considered as compilations of facts about the land and people. They were not considered as adequate historical descriptions of the land and people. Historians of Keralam believed that the primary function of historical text was to impart knowledge, instil love of mother country and pride in its antiquity and identity of the native state. They believed that the manuals imparted only knowledge and could not carry out these functions of historical texts.[62]

Sangam age and historiography of Tamilakam

'Sangam age' is a major theme in the historiography of Tamilakam. What is Sangam? What is the chronological framework of Sangam were considered as significant historical questions in the historiography of South India. Due to the meticulous studies of the literary compositions of the Sangam age a large body of literature was made available. Sangam literature was utilised as a major

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[61] For the relevant discussion on the tradition of Cheraman Perumal. See Atchutha Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1934, pp. 34-35. This was opposed by Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai and he ascertained that this was the result of inadequate methodology. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai *Chila Kerala Charithra Prasanangal* (Mal), Kottayam, 1955, p. 29.

[62] K.P. Padmanaba Menon, *Cochi Rajya Charithram*, Ernakulam, 1914, p.29.

source by the linguistic historians and freelance writers.[63]

Historians pursued different methodologies to derive an objective history of Sangam age. The extent of Sangam age, socio-economic life, nature of literary compositions, and political history were studied extensively. There were differences of opinion among historians though critical reading of the literary compositions was the chief method of study employed by them. T.N. Subramanian refuted the views held by the earlier scholars P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar and K.A. Nilakantasastri. He defined Sangam as an association of poets. According to P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar the idea of Sangam often translated as academy is a modern one and he argued that to transfer it to many hundreds of years before is an anachronism. He assigned the influence of heterodox religions in the term Sangam. It was asserted by T.N. Subramanian that prior to the term Sangam it was known as *Avaiyam* or *Kudal*. Historians presented contradictory opinions on the origin of Sangam age. They never mentioned the

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[63] It was pointed out that Sangam literature was only partially utilised even by historians like K.A. Nilakantasastri. He mentioned the necessity of a monograph on Sangam polity but that was materialised by him only at a later date (*Sangam Age: its Cults and Cultures,* 1972). T.N. Subramanian is credited with having made a meaningful attempt to draw out history from Sangam literature (*The Administration and Social life of the Sangam Tamils:* 1966, *South Indian Polity,* 1956). "His effort was praiseworthy because the Sangam literature in contrast to the theoretical and idllic life of the sacred vedic and post vedic literature was directly related to an age whose patrons authors, environs and ethos are better known to us concretely related to our history." S. Settar, *Some Aspects of South Indian Historiography, SIHC proceedings,* 8th Annual Session, Pune, 1988, p.210.

upper limit of this age.[64] Definition of the period of Sangam age and the literary compositions were matters of controversy. T.N. Subramanian disagreed with V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar and P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar who assigned this to the 5th century B.C. he assigned them to an early period as the literary compositions of Sangam age were regarded as unusually complete and largely realistic picture of the very ancient Tamil country.[65] Similarly there were contradictory opinions among historians as to literacy compositions which are to be included in the genre 'Sangam literature.' Often perspectives in literary compositions which are interpreted as Aryan elements to determine whether the literary compositions belong to the Sangam age.[66] Though aryanisation is offered as the explanatory model to characterise the glories of Sangam age contradictory opinions were presented. V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar and S. Vaiyapuri Pillai asserted that the system of four fold division of caste spread in Keralam and Tamilakam towards the end of the Sangam period. Aryanisation as the explanatory model for the four fold division of caste is reputed by some scholars.

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[64] Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *Keralam Anchus, Aarum Noottandukalil* (Mal) Trivandrum, 1961, p.30.

[65] For details see T.N. Subramanian, *History of Tamil Nadu To 1565 A.D.*, Madurai, 1914, pp.61-62.

[66] There were serious discussions on the upperlimit of the Sangam age. The literary composition by Mamulanar and Tholkapiyam are extensively studied for this historical problem. P.T. Srinivasa Aiyangar believed that the literary composition by mamulanar belonged to the post Sangam age. Later historians Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai and T.H.P. Chentharasseri contradicted this. They asserted that the text illustrates the attempts to introduce Aryan cult in the South of India. For the relevant discussion see Elam Kunjan Pillai *Samskarathinte Nazhikakallukal* (Mal), Trichur, 1958. T.H.P Chentharassery *Elamkulavum Kerala Charithravum* (Mal) Trivandrum, 1988, pp. 220-224.

T.K. Venkata Subramanian illustrates evidences from the Sangam literature that there were divisions in the Tamil society which resembled *jati*. He argues that there were castes in the social structure of the Tamil society from very early times and the speculation that the four fold division of caste had its roots in the *varna* system is an anachronism.[67] But P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar based his conclusion on the critical reading of the literary compositions by *mamulanar* and *Tolkappiyam*. He stated that these texts revealed the beginning of aryanisation. This historian asserted that aryanisation existed in Keralam at an early age than Tamilakam.[68] There were also attempts to identify the extent of Tamilakam from Sangam literature.[69]

The perspectives of Aryan culture especially the references to the divisions of caste are identified as the beginnings of distinctiveness of Keralam. Elamkulam considered that the study of Sangam age was necessary for a proper understanding of the early history of Keralam. He found that the studies of Sangam age by Kanakasabhai, Sivaraja Pillai, P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar are

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[67] For further details see T.K. Venkata Subramanian "Social Roots of Tamil Ideology" in *IHC proceedings*, Vol.I, 29th annual session, Hyderabad, 1978, pp.180-198. Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan argues that Aryanisation/Sanskritisation are inadequate to explain the complex network which was not uniform everywhere in the South. He stated that such terms echoed a sense of impositions/invasions which were not real. He argues that Jatikarana was the ultimate result. Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan, Presidential Address, *IHC proceedings*, Vol.I, 29th Annual session, Hyderabad, 1978, p.12.

[68] P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils from the Early times to 600 A.D.*, Madras, 1934, pp. 209-234.

[69] V. Kanakasabai, *The Tamils One Thousand Years Ago*, Madras, 1914, pp. 124-129.

inadequate as these scholars lacked good knowledge of Sanskrit. He also believed that the popular assumption that there were three Sangams was an obsession of the historians of Tamilakam. This obsession prevented enquiry into the development of literature after the so defined 'third sangam.'[70] Historians differed in their conclusions on the definitions of Sangam. Sangam was defined as an academy which existed in the early centuries of Christian era. So the early centuries of Christian era were defined as the Sangam age.[71] The age of Sangam, its origin and end were some of the questions for which the historians had no satisfactory explanation. Because the dominant assumption was that the rulers and poets in these literary compositions were contemporaries.

The political history drawn out from Tamil heroic poems popularly known as the Sangam literature suffered from obvious limitations. Chronological ordering of dynasties, wars, interdynastic relations, kings, queens, courtiers were the themes dealt with by the historians of the colonial south. It was assumed that the ancient dynasties continued without break or ruptures. The chieftancies of one age are considered as the monarchies of other. The dynastic drifts, the splits and the branching off of the dynasties are

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[70] These ideas are reiterated by Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai in his writings. To cite a few examples Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *Annathe Keralam* (Mal) Trivandrum, *Samskarathinte Nazhikakallukal* (Mal), Trichur, 1958

[71] Sangam age was defined as the age of indigenous culture. This was defined as Dravidian/Tamil culture.

described. But substantial themes such as the ethnic basis and the socio-economic circumstances behind the transformation into monarchical state, the upward political and social mobility of groups were left out. It was pointed out that political history was the favourite craft of historians of the colonial South. The writing of history was undertaken by them as a sort of game of riddles which they played well.[72] It was also pointed out that in spite of the availability of epigraphs the history of dynasties such as Satavahanas the Gangas, the Kadambas the Chalukyas and minor feudatories were not well considered. Besides, a comprehensive socio-economic history even a comprehensive political history of South India did not engage the attention of the historians of the colonial South. It is pointed out that the colonial historiography of the South created the impression that South India did not have of its own history in the ancient period and that the historic period started with the Pallavas and ended with the Cholas.

This is attributed to the peculiar trends in the craft of historians of the colonial South. The early phase (before 1920s) is characterised as the age of emergence of historiography as a part of national historiography. The first generation of South Indian historians though expressed resentment at the inadequate representation of south India in the imperial and national

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[72] G.S. Dikshit, Presidential Address, *SIHC proceedings*, 15th annual Session, Berhampur, 1995, pp.21-34.

historiography "attempted to uphold Indian identity and honour of the nation."[73]

The post colonial historians assert that a broad framework of history in the colonial South was not acceptable. It is pointed out that though several historical texts were titled after South India, "South India and Deccan meant to each of the zonal historians nothing more than his own linguistic area."[74] Of course a few texts were recognised as exemptions *Economic conditions of South India* (A. Appadourai, 1936) *South India and Her Muhammaden Invaders* (S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar, 1921). It is pointed out that the first comprehensive history of peninsular India from the pre-history to the fall of the *Vijayanagara* appeared only in Independent India (A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, 1955).

What is problematic for the post independent historians with the texts mentioned earlier is

a)   The former centre around the regions which often appear as 'core' in political histories of the colonial south.

b)   Though S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar repeatedly defined South India as the regions south of the Krishna and Tungabadra rivers, his studies were confined to the Madras Province. His titles (*Some Contributions of South India to Indian Culture (1923) Ancient India And South Indian History and Culture* (1941) are more concerned with the geographical extent of the Tamil South and thus the contents of did not justify the titles.

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[73]   Ashok Settar, N.Subramanians, *Studies in South Indian History: A Historiographic Critique in the proceedings of SIHC*, 12th session, Dharwad, 1992, p.126.

[74]   *Op. cit.* p.129.

It was observed that the dilemma of historiography of South India was "whether or not to fall into Pan Indian Social frame work of the *varma, jati, asramas,* family, marriage and womanhood."[75] This became evident in the second phase of south Indian historiography. This second phase is "characterised by an extremely narrow vision of political history. The regional histories are rated as consisting of the factual details of political history. The frontiers of south Indian as envisaged in the historical texts are found to be shrinking. It is pointed out that the pages devoted to the historical account of minor dynasties outside the orbit of Kaveri delta are scanty. "From the Satavahanas to the Hoysalas with the Sangam age, the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Pandyas occupying the centre stage and the other dynasties pushed to the side wings."[76] The sentimental attachment to Tamilakam in the subsequent historical texts was on the pretext that "a definitive history of India can be thought of only when the histories of its regions have been written exhaustively."[77] It is pointed out as an extension of the justification for regional history put forward by the historians of Bengal, Maharashtra and other regions.[78] The claim "as regional histories are written by the local people whose competence to write them includes their belonging to the local ethos and so have insights not easily gained by outsiders"[79] is dispensed away as biased interpretation of history.[80]

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[75] *Op. cit.* p. 31.

[76] S. Setttar, *Some Aspects of South Indian Historiography SIHC Proceedings,* 18th Annual Session, Pune, 1988, p. 147.

[77] T.N. Subramanian, *History of Tamilnad to 1565 A.D.,* Madurai 1914, p. 3.

[78] *Op. cit.*

[79] T. N. Subramanian, History of Tamilnad to 1336, Madurai, 1972.

[80] N. Ashok Settar, *Subramanians studies In South Indian History: A Historiographical Critique, SIHC Proceedings,* 12th session, Dharwad, 1992, p. 143.

The causes for this trend are attributed to the poor linguistic skills of the second generation of historians who were also not used to the meticulous efforts of the first generation of historians. The second generation of historians are rated as "lacking competence even in own region and also not sure of the sources at hand." This is regarded "as a by product of the swelling tide of regional sub-national sentiments in Free India which has percolated in to academic circles.[81] It is pointed out that the pioneer historians only aspired to search political and cultural roots of the people of their own regions that reared them".[82] It was also admitted that later on "regional enthusiasm and language chauvinism became determinants" in south Indian historiography.[83] Similarly, the emergence of monographs is attributed to the general trend which existed during this period. *The Rastrakutas And their Times* (A.S. Attekar 1934) *Gangas of Talakad* (M.V. Krishna Rao 1936) the studies of Vijayanagar empire are regarded as factors which fascinated the historians of South of India.[84] One of the draw backs of south of India it was felt that the indigenous historians had little concern "to look at the recent background of their regions."[85] Hence it was observed that researchers who explored the colonial period were the scholars from America and England.[86]

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[81] Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan, Presidential address *I.H.C. Proceedings*, 29th session, Hyderabad, 1978, p. 18.

[82] Dr. S. Kadhirvel sectional President's address, *SIHC Proceedings*, XVIII Annual session, Kalady, 1988, p. 110.

[83] *Op. cit.* p. 112.

[84] *Op. cit.* p. 113.

[85] *Op. cit.* p. 115.

[86] *Op. cit.* p. 116.

To conclude, the absence of inter disciplinary approach, the absence of integrated study attributed to colonial historiography should be viewed as not the short comings of historians but they were limits beyond the control of historians as these analytical tools were contributions of modern epistemology. It is found that "in conventional Tamilian historiography the absence of theorizing, conceptualisation analytical framework are regarded as drawbacks. The recently developed techniques of textual criticism such as the post structuralism were unknown to them. The application of inter disciplinary approach and the recent developments in archaeology anthropology and sociology were also absent."[87] It is impossible for any historian to examine all the sources as there are additions to new sources and new perspectives emerge. Thus as a human being the historian can not transcend over the epistemological shifts from time to time. As any other human being the historian also is subjected to the constraints of "being in the world." One significant point of difference of colonial historiography from the post colonial historiography is that the texts in the colonial period did not aspire to be the last word. They were intended to be texts more for general readers. They wanted to instil values, models of states from the West. They attempted to remind the present generations of the missing faces of ancient heroes and the bygone golden ages.

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[87] Dr. K. Sadhasivan, Address of the Sectional President, *SIHC Proceedings*, 17th Annual Session, Waltair, 1997, p. 88.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The present study hinges on the fact that the emergence of history as a discipline in the southern and northern parts of India took place under colonialism. Analysing in detail as to how the past was defined in different regions of the sub-continent during the pre-colonial period, the study discovers that there existed a series of *genres* and modes of pan-Indian character for representing the past. The central argument developed in the study is that the coming into being of 'history' as the most authentic mode of representation of the past, was part of the colonising strategies too that involved the steady process of invalidation and replacement of the pre-colonial forms and *genres* current in the sub-continent.

Focusing specifically on of the pre-colonial forms of representation and modes of realisation of the past in the southern regions of India, the study shows that all of them enjoyed equal authority, authenticity and credibility. What turned out to be curious in the context is that across their variety existed a kind of unity in terms of the structure, composition and strategies of *genres*.

In the study of the *Vedic*, *Ithihasic*, *Puranic* and *non-puranic* modes of representation of the past, which evolved over the centuries through various stages, what became explicit is the fact that they embodied idealised reflections of societies where the notions of *varna*, *vaṁśa* and *dharma* dominated.

Following the leading scholars in the field the study could reaffirm that the traditional modes of conceiving the past in the pre-colonial societies of India underwent constant restructuring in tune with the changing political, social and cultural needs of their times.

There are numerous non-puranic traditions, which are categorised into *mahakavya-s*, *laghukavya-s* and *carita-s*. Selected samples such as *Raghuvamsa kavya*, *Gaudapaho*, *Hammiramaha kavya*, *Rajatarangini*, *Harshacarita*, *Vikramankadevacarita*, *Rama carita*, *Vikramankabhyadaya*, *Prithiviraja vijayam* are reviewed as classical examples. From this it is concluded that these *kavya-s* and *carita-s* were reflections of the transitions to the medieval society which was characterised by the rise of feudal aristocracies. These forms of representation combined mythology and fabricated genealogy with the heroic deeds of their patrons in contemporary socio-political and cultural universe. It is clear that in the southern Indian regions also *vaṁsavali*-s and oral traditions were used as sources of legitimisation until the colonial *genre* of history dominated.

As regards the representation of space and time in the pre-colonial constructions of the past, it is concluded that the concept of space and time is expressed through symbols of peoples' lived time. This representation mixed up cosmogeny, sacred ideas and the events of immediate past. Yet this was sensible as it was rooted in the cultural practices of the society.

Besides the pan-Indian models there were specific forms of representation of past in Tamilakam and Keralam. They differed from each other.

In Tamilakam *ula, parani, kathaipadalkal, nattupadalkal,* and *pallupadalkal* were the *genres* of literature that constructed and realised the past. The forms of realisation of the past that were current in pre-colonial Keralam were closely related to the pan-Indian model. In addition to the *ulpatti* pattern, *kavya-s* and *carita-s* there existed different categories of songs such as *Padaipattukal, Teyyam pattukal, Tottam pattukal* and so forth enabling us to conclude that in these enshrining the past was only one among the multiple functions. Often what dominated were the socio-ritual roles of tradition in regulating, legitimising and authenticating rights and privileges of inheritance, maintaining status and ranking besides binding the people together. Such people seldom think about understanding the past as a part of intellectual pursuits and naturally societies in pre-colonial India never considered past as a domain of study to be pursued through scholastic rules.

The present study by mapping out the making of the past in Tamilakam and Keralam in the colonial period concludes that the issues in the historiography of the far South primarily sprang up from the conflicting loyalties to brahmanism and anti-brahmanism. It is found out that the feelings of anti-brahmanism led to the counter historicisation of Tamilakam. At the same time the historiography of Kerala reflected loyalty to the brahmanism, for the political authority and social power relations of the region was largely subservient to brahmanical caste tradition. It is obvious that the basic premises in the historiography of India such as antiquity, continuity and civilisation were employed by the historians of Tamilakam and Keralam to write the history of their regions.

In examining the relationship between the interpretations of historians and the sources they used, no single scientific criterion is found for the construction of geographical and historical units. These are not absolute. This is illustrated through the geographical formulations and political definitions of South India. It is concluded that interpretations played a major role in the colonial historiography. The historians exercised autonomy though they disqualified the autonomy of the author in the pre-colonial forms of representation.

In tracing the roots of Tamil identity in the historiography of Tamilakam, it is interesting to note that the Tamil heroic poems and the different *genres* such as *Ula*, *Parani*, *Nattupadalkal* and others did not define who is a Tamil. It is argued here that the historicisation of Tamil identity is realised through the studies in the disciplines of anthropology, Dravidian languages, epigraphy, archaeology and so on that were initiated by the power regime of colonialism. It is also concluded that the *Saiva sidhanta* literature of the medieval period, the local narratives by the Tamil writers and above all the Dravidian movement of the 19th century were the determinants in the creation of cultural/regional/racial identity of Tamilakom.

In tracing the formation of cultural/regional/racial/identities in the colonial historiography of South India it is concluded that this has methodological errors. The problems of omission/partial representation of southern India in the historiography of India are repeated. The historians of southern India treated this as methodologically unproblematic. These notions of 'whole' and 'part' are illustrated

through the arguments put forward by the colonial historians of Tamilakam for excluding the westcoast, in the definition of Tamilakam. The trend is visible in the historiography of Keralam also.

The studies of the historiographical reflections reveal the absence of the notion of southern India as an entity. Similarly, the differences between the historiography of Keralam and Tamilakam reveal that historiographic non-unity is the characteristic of colonial historiography of South India.

In studying the role of traditional narratives, travelogues, missionary literature and anthropological writings it is concluded that the notion of Keralam as a unit was absent in the historiography of Keralam. The political atmosphere of Keralam motivated the historians to undertake the study of history of regional kingdoms.

In the critique of historical methodology in the colonial South it is found out that the native historians discarded the pre-colonial forms of representation of past as false. From the discussions on the methods and concepts of history by colonial historians, it is clear that they adhered to the theoretical norms of positivism. The hierarchical ranking of sources by historians is studied. It reveals that in spite of the general agreement on elements essential for the writing of the 'scientific history', even historians who followed the same method brought-forth contradictory findings on certain issues which were defined by them as 'historical questions.' From the examination of the attitude of historians to

Sangam literature, Sanskrit literary works, and Tamil epics it is concluded that the historians attempted to write history within a framework of their choice.

The historicisation of the nature of state reveals one of the dilemmas of historiography whether or not to fall into pan-Indian social framework of the *jati*, *varna, vaṁsa* and *āsrama*. This is revealed through the discussions of historians on Aryanisation in South India. Similarly, the characterisation of the Cola state as highly centralised and bureaucratised, at the same time combining the local institutions within this paradigm is one of the themes of reassessment. It is concluded that adhering to theoretical models and concepts of the West without adhering to original documents is one of the limitations of history.

In examining the nature of historiography it is seen that the sentimental attachment to the regions around Kaveri and Tamilakam emerging prominent. Similarly it is seen that historians focused their studies on specific kingdoms. What is striking here is that though the early historians of southern India criticised the inadequate representation of southern regions of India in the national history, they highlighted the nationhood significantly. But later, there was a change. Though several historical works were titled after South India, of course a few exceptions apart, many of the historians meant only their own linguistic regions.

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Appendices

Appendix - A

Non-English terms and their diacritical marks

Anusasana Parvam	-	Anuśāsana Parvam
Astika Parvam	-	Āstika Parvam
Akhyanas	-	Ākhyāna-s
Caritas	-	Carita-s
Itihasas	-	Itihasa-s
Ikshavaku	-	Ikshavāku
Indra	-	Indra
Jaya samhita	-	Jaya samhita
Jana mejaya	-	Jana mejaya
Kavyas	-	Kavya-s
Kauravas	-	Kauravas
Lomaharsana	-	Lomaharsana
Mahabharata	-	Mahabharata
Narasamsis	-	Nārāsamsi-s
Pandavas	-	Pandavas
Pauranikas	-	Pauranikas
Pancalaksana	-	Pañcalaksana
Rama	-	Rama
Ramayana	-	Ramayana
Ravana	-	Ravana
Raksasas	-	Rāksasas
Ramaharshapa	-	Ramaharshapa
Sauti	-	Sauti
Sambhava Parvam	-	Sambhava Parvam
Smrti	-	Smrti
Smrtis	-	Smrti-s
Vamsa	-	Vamsa
Varna	-	Varna
Visvamitra	-	Viśvāmitra
Vamsanucarita	-	Vamsanucarita
Vaisampayana	-	Vaiśāmpāyana
Vyasa	-	Vyāsa
Ugrasravas	-	Ugrasravas

Table 2.1
Corpus of Vedic literature

	Basic Unit	Agency	Geographical location	Approximate period	Mode of transmission	Structure	Coinciding Brahmanas	Coinciding Aryanyakas	Coinciding Upanishads	Coincding Sutras	Coincding Vedangas
Rigvedic Samhita Mandalas 1-8	Suktas	Families social groups	Punjab Eastern Himalayas	1000 BC	Oral	Mantras ## Chhandas ##			*Kaushitaki Upanishad Mandukya Upanishad*		
Rigvedic Samhita Mandalas 9-10	Suktas	Rsis Gotras	Kingdoms of Kuru panchala	After 1000 B.C	Oral	Hymns Chharanas ##	*Aitreya Brahmana Sakhayana/ Kaushitaki Brahmana*	*Aitreya Aranyaka Kaushitaki Aranyaka*	*Chhandogya upanishad Kena upanishad Mandukya upanishad*		
Sama Veda	Richas	Priesthood	Kingdoms of Kuru, Panchala, Vidhea	Post vedic period	Grama gepa gana Aranyagan a Uhagana Ukhyagana	Chhandas ##	*Chhandogya Brahmana Paudha Brahmana Shadvinsa Samavidhi Brahmana Arsheya Brahmana*	*Chhandogya Aranyaka*			

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Yajurveda Krsna sukta Yajur Yajur veda veda Krsna Yarjuveda	Verses	Priest-hood	Kuru Panchala Vidhea Kosala	Post vedic period	Recital	Verses, prose	*Taittireya Brahmana*	Taittireya Aranyaka	*Vansa upanishad Devatadyaya Upanishad Samhiitopanished*		
Sukta yajurveda	Verses	Priest-hood	Kuru Panchala Vidhea Kosala	Post Vedic period	Recital	Verses, prose	*Satapatha Brahmana*		*Brihaharyaka vaja saneyi Upanishad Mandukya upanishad*		
Atharva ved	Verses	Priest-hood	Eastern regions	Pre-Buddhist period	Oral	Mantras verses	*Gopatha Brahmana*	Nil	*Prasna Upanishad Mandaka Upanishad Kena Upanishad Mandukya Upanishad*		

Index ##

Mantras	:	Metrical verses
Chhandas	:	Songs
Chharanas	:	Explanation for the practice of rituals
Richas	:	Suktas set to music

Note: By the term coinciding *Brahmanas/Aranyakas/Upanishads* is meant coincidence of the *Brahmanas/Aryanakas/Upanishads* with the *Vedic Samhitas* at the thematic level and not at the chronological level.

Sources : 1. Rama Chandra Gosh, *The Indo Aryans Their History, Creed and Practice*, Calcutta: 1881.
2. Lechhami Dhar Kalla Shastri, *The Home of the Aryans*, Delhi: 1930.

Table 2.2
Literary forms incorporated in the mahabharatha

No.	Name of Parvam	Akhyanam	Caritam	Vijayam	Ulpatti	Katha
1.	Paulomam	Udangopakyanam	-	-	Chyavanolppatti	
2.	Ashthika Parvam	-	-	-	Aasthikolppatti Nagagardua Arunolppatti	Palazhı Madanam
3.	Sambhava Parvam	Ambopakhyanam Ankara varnopakyanam Vashishtamy Pakhyanam Pachenthropakhyanam Sundopasundeopakhyanam Manthapalopakhyanam	Santhanu ulpaba caritham Kalmashapada caritham Panchanaitham caritham Devayani caritham	Rajasanjaya vijayam	Somaraj vamsolppattti Vedavyasolppatti Devolppatti Bharatholppatti Dhucharashtro ulppatti Vidurolppatti Panduputhrolppatti Saratholppatti Bharatholppatti Oulolppatti	
4.	Sabha Parvam	-	-	Digvijayam	-	Jarasantha Vadham Sisupala Vadham
5.	Aaranya Parvam	Nalpakhyanam	-	-	-	-
6.	Virada Parvam	-	-	-	-	Kichaka Vadham
7.	Udyoga Parvam	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Bhishma Parvam	-	-	-	-	-

9.	Drona Parvam	*Srnjayopakhyanam*	-	-	-	Jayadritha Vadham Drona Vadham
10.	Karna Parvam	-	-	-	-	Dusasana Vadham Karna Vadham
11.	Satya Parvam	-	-	-	-	-
12.	Saupthika Parvam	-	-	-	-	-
13.	Aishika Parvam	-	-	-	-	-
14.	Sthri Parvam	-	-	-	-	-
15.	Sthri Parvam	-	-	-	-	-
16.	Anusasnika Parvam	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Atchutha Varier (trans) *Sree Maha Bharatham (Malayalam)*, *Kerala Bhasha Ganam*, Trivandrum: 1956.

Table 2.3

Divisions of *Purana-s*

Maha-*Purana-s*		Upa-*purana-s*	
1.	Brahma	1.	Santakumara
2.	Padma	2.	Narasimha
3.	Visnu	3.	Nanda
4.	Vayu	4.	Sivadharma
5.	Bhagavata	5.	Durvasa
6.	Naradiya	6.	Naradiya
7.	Markendeya	7.	Kapila
8.	Agni	8.	Vamana
9.	Bhavisya	9.	Usanas
10.	Brahmavaivarta	10.	Manava
11.	Varaha	11.	Varuna
12.	Linga	12.	Kali
13.	Skanda	13.	Mahesavara
14.	Vamana	14.	Samba
15.	Kurma	15.	Saura
16.	Matsya	16.	Parasara
17.	Garuda	17.	Marica
18.	Brahmanda	18.	Bhargava

Source: A.D. Pusalker, *Studies in the Epics and Puranas*, Bombay: 1955

Table 3.1

Contributions of Missionaries to Malayalam

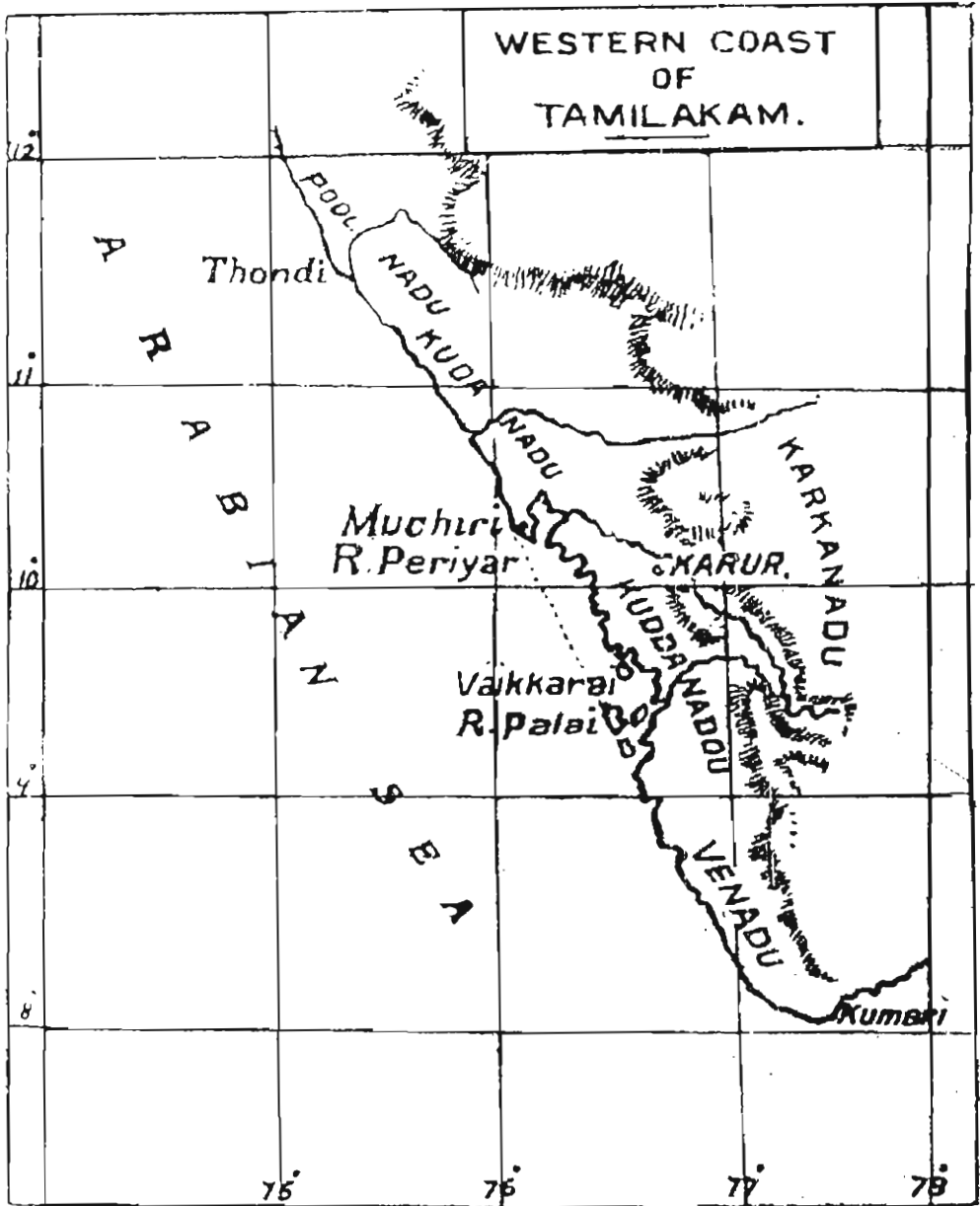|	Name of Missionary	Title of the Text
1	Rev: Joseph Peet	A Grammar of the Malayalam Language
2	Rev: Joseph Peet	Elements in Malayalam Grammar
3	John Earnest Hongsladen (Father Arnos)	Malayalam-Sanskrit Dictionary Malayalam-Portuguese Dictionary Malayalam-Portuguese Grammar
4	Father Paulinos	Dictionarium Laterno Malabarico Sanskratanikkum Manuscripts on Tamil Grammar
5	Dr John Baptist	Dictionarium Malabarium
6	Rev. Thepos & Amadesimeon	Portuguese-Malayalam Dictionary
7	Rev. Stephen	Dictionarium Malabarico Granthonik
8	Jacob Hanseggar	Vocabulario-Da-Lingua Malabar
9	Heraman Gundert	Malayalam-Sanskrit Dictinary Malayalam-Portuguese Dictionary Malayalam-Portuguese Grammar
10	Benjamin Baily	Malayalam-English Dictionary English Malayalam Dictionary
11	Dr. Anjeto Francis	Malayalam-Grammar Malayalam-Latin Dictionary

Map 3.1

PHYSICAL
FEATURES
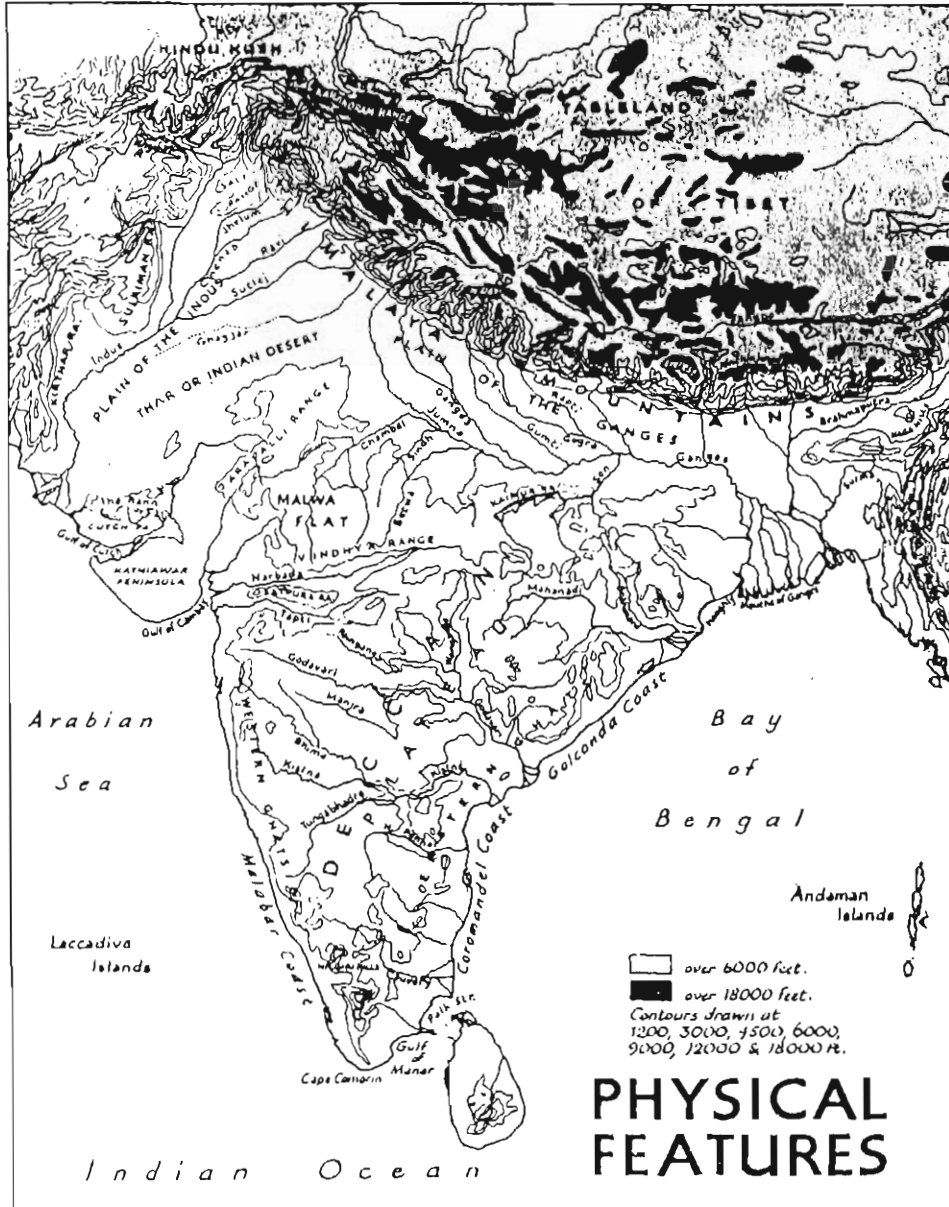
Source: A.L. Basham, *A Cultural History of India*, New Delhi: 1975 (Reprint).

Map 3.2

ANCIENT INDIA

Source: Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, New Delhi: 1958 (Reprint).

Map 3.3

WESTERN COAST
OF
TAMILAKAM.

A R A B I A N   S E A

Thondi

POOL NADU KUDA

NADU

Muchiri
R.Periyar

KARUR.

KARKANADU

Vajkkaral
R.Palai

KUDDANADOU

VENADU

Kumari

Source: V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras: 1904.

Map 3.4

Source: V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras: 1904.